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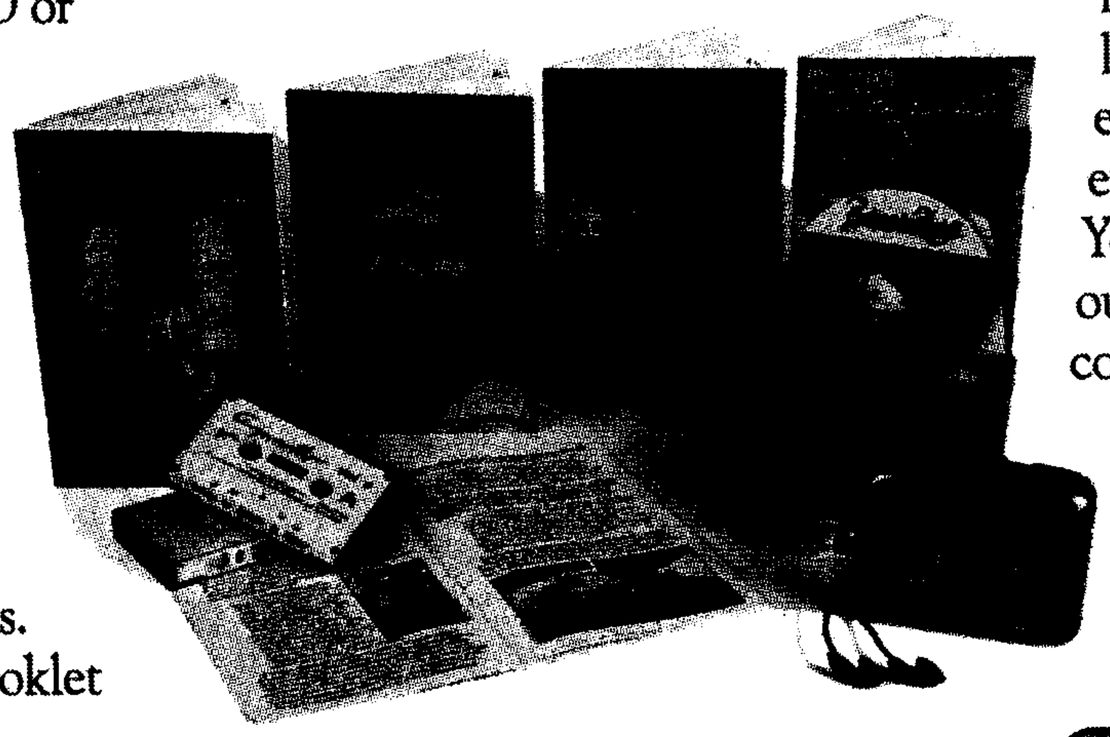

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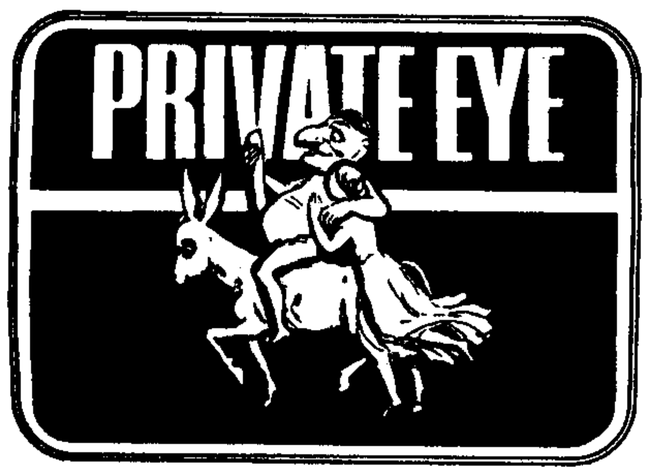

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THE government has found just the chap to be deputy chairman of its new "company limited by guarantee" which will take over the doomed business of Railtrack. He is Adrian Montague, a former banker whose exciting business history has been frequently told in recent *Eyes*.

He was a special favourite of disgraced former paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson, who in the summer of 1997 put him in charge of the treasury's new private finance taskforce. Described in a treasury press statement as "a City heavyweight", Montague came straight from the merchant bank Dresdner Kleinwort where he was co-head of global project finance.

His political contacts had not been limited to Labour chieftains like Robinson. He had been spotted by the Tories while working for City solicitors Linklaters & Paine. As head of projects there, he masterminded much of the complex Tory plans to privatise the railways.

"New" Labour pretends it is opposed to that privatisation, but it is certainly not opposed to Mr Montague, who has gone from strength to strength. The point of the original treasury taskforce was to share power between public and private businessmen. This was rejected in June last year when the taskforce was itself privatised and reformed into a new organisation appropriately called PUK – deputy chairman Adrian Montague.

Mr Montague was free to work for private organisations again and went to work for Michael Page Plc, which floated on the stock exchange in April last year and almost immediately issued a profits warning that set the shares tumbling. It was probably his triumphs at Michael Page which earned Mr Montague his CBE in last year's new years honours – and now his plum job at Failtrack.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Whilst everyone knows Lee has had his problems in the past, he seemed to have really knuckled down in the last couple of years."

— Ex-footballer Brendan Ormsby discussing Lee Bowyer on Leeds station Radio Aire FM.

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ABC

THE indignation of Leeds manager David O'Leary against his two star players Lee Bowyer and Jonathan Woodgate is of recent origin.

For some months after the men were arrested more than two years ago, O'Leary was keen they should be given a fair trial. "I can honestly say," he told the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, "that the two of them are great people, and we will stand by them until the case is resolved."

Though they were expressly banned from the English national team until their case was settled, both Woodgate and Bowyer went on playing for Leeds while they were on trial. On one occasion, Bowyer played a match in the evening after he had attended court during the day. Indeed, so keen was the manager and his team to keep his stars earning money for the club that they sent along a lawyer to beg the judge to postpone the trial until the football season was over.

The judge, Mr Justice Poole, agreed and the trial was postponed until the following summer. It was only after intervention by the lord chancellor that it was brought forward again only to be postponed yet again after the *Sunday Mirror* published an interfering article while the jury was out.

GNOME'S BORES OF THE YEAR 2001
pages 20 & 21

CONSIGNIA, the shambles formerly known as the Post Office, came up with a wonderful piece of corporate PR nonsense when south Londoners complained about the forthcoming closure of East Croydon post office.

Locals are not happy about the cost-cutting decision to close the branch on 11 January because, sited opposite Croydon's mainline rail, bus and tram stations, it is by far the most convenient of the area's three post offices for most people to get to.

Kevin Ray, head of Consignia's south London division, wrote to customers to say that the closure would be softened by the fact that they would still be able to use branches in Croydon High Street and St James Road with ease, as both were "downhill". When asked to clarify whether that meant that any return journey would therefore be "uphill", a press officer explained that what Mr Ray had meant to say was that people "wouldn't have to walk up and down hills on the way there".

No wonder the footsore folk of Croydon looked puzzled as they posted their Christmas cards this year.

THE strike by 146 pilots on the river Humber, forecast in the *Eye* two issues ago, is in full swing. The desperate attempt by the firm which runs Hull docks, ABP, to have it declared illegal collapsed at the court of appeal, where the judges said the strike was legal even though the pilots are self-employed.

Infuriated by the rebuff, ABP directors issued instructions and sweeteners to the 32 pilots they have specially trained to break the strike. So far, their efforts have not been impressive. On the first night of the strike (10 December), an ABP trainee helped guide the coaster Ralph Buck out of Goole. He managed to crash it into another coaster, the Celtic Forrester. The damage to both vessels will lead to expensive dry dock repairs next year.

Another coaster, the Nesse, while being guided into Goole by the new experts from ABP, ran aground. ABP's pilots, in some embarrassment, jumped ship and drove home leaving the coaster high and dry. Yet another boat, the Lara, smashed into the middle-Whitton buoy with such force the buoy was torn from its moorings and sunk.

ABP will be liable for all this and any more damage caused during the strike, and the individual "pilots" may find they are not covered by the same insurance afforded to the more experienced men on strike. The prospects for ABP are grim. It will not be able to fend off the fury of the ship-owners for long, and its only experienced pilot, harbourmaster Reg Hames, is already exhausted by a few days strike-breaking.

EDUCASHUN, EDUCASHUN

"Youth unemployment has fell..."

— Joan Ryan, MP for Enfield North, Radio 4.

WHY was a crucial line left out of Lady Carla Powell's letter to the editor published in the *Daily Telegraph* in response to an article by Barbara Amiel, wife of *Torygraph* proprietor Lord Conrad Black?

Amiel accused an unnamed "hostess" and "doyenne of London's political salon scene", widely assumed to be Lady Powell, of saying that "she couldn't stand Jews and everything happening to them was their own fault". She also alleged that an anonymous "ambassador of a major EU country", identified in other newspapers as the French ambassador, had described Israel as "that shitty little country".

For her part Lady Powell categorically denies ever having said such a thing, but for some reason the *Torygraph* omitted to publish the final line of her letter suggesting Ms Amiel had made the whole thing up. "My conclusion," wrote Lady Carla, "is that both these quotations were invented".

AS Manchester heads for the international limelight as host to the 2002 Commonwealth games, and only months after the 11 September terrorist attacks, the city's airport has decided to cut 200 security jobs, reducing the number of permanent staff from 700 to 560 and not recruiting temporary staff over the busy summer period.

One man who will not lose his job, however, is head of security John Donnison. In January 2000 the former Leicestershire police chief was found guilty of fiddling his expenses and sentenced to 200 hours community service, but this did not prevent him from being appointed first airport fire service manager at Manchester, and then in July 2001, head of security at the airport.

"We bring gold, frankincense and MMR"

CHERIE BLAIR's campaign to liberate Afghan women should start in the London borough of Hounslow.

The borough is the first port of call for many Afghan asylum seekers arriving in Britain, including those men recently convicted of hijacking a plane on the runway at Stansted airport.

Home office agency the National Asylum Support Service offers support to the refugees including English lessons run from several centres in the borough, but sources say that some Afghan men are refusing to allow their wives and daughters to learn English. Staff have been told not to interfere and the home office makes the blandest of statements: "English language classes are available wherever possible along with health care etc. Whilst staff want to encourage all the programmes, asylum seekers are not forced to take them up."

Perhaps if David Blunkett gets his way they soon will be.

Her co-presenter Tony Baker said: "I think he is a very funny man, very intelligent. He liked to speak to people at the bottom as well as the top.

Daily Mirror (on Jonathan King)

THIS year's British Construction Industry Award for Building, sponsored by the British Standards Institution and designed to highlight an example of environmentally sensitive construction, has gone to Enron-owned Wessex Water for its Cotswold headquarters.

The award was judged by Sir Stuart Lipton, the chief executive of building firm Stanhope plc. He obviously does not read the *Eye*, which has repeatedly detailed Wessex Water's abysmal environmental record. The *Eye* has highlighted the supreme irony of chief executive Colin Skellet addressing a Wessex-sponsored fringe meeting of the Labour party conference on "environment and sustainability" and has questioned why Wessex Water's environmental director Gareth Jones was awarded an MBE in this year's Queen's birthday honours.

For others who have missed the coverage, Wessex has accumulated fines amounting to £36,500 for pollution offences including pouring raw sewage into the River Avon, pouring fuel oil from sewage works into groundwater and poisoning fish with ammonia-filled sewage discharges.

FILM: To Kill a Mockingbird (1962) Gregory Peck stars as a lawyer in a small southern American town who risks the wrath of his neighbours to defend a black man charged with rap.

Brighton Argus

IF home secretary David Blunkett is serious about cracking down on bogus police sickness he should give an award to former Met inspector John Kenny.

Despite being vilified and ignored by everyone save the *Eye*, Mr Kenny campaigned for years against monstrous sickness claims made by some colleagues. In 1995, for instance, he and we noted that claims in the Met alone had cost 354,661 working days. The increase over the previous year (13,010 days) was equivalent to 50 police officers working full time.

Later that year the Met stopped publishing details of police sick pay. Mr Kenny's research showed that the number of police working days lost through sickness had doubled in a year from 30,000 a month to 60,000, and that the number of days taken off through sickness was equivalent to employing 3,000 officers full time.

Mr Kenny was always puzzled by his failure to be promoted to superintendent, but perhaps he shouldn't have been surprised. After he retired, he found a report on him from the promotion selection board in 1989. "He seems to have a fixation with absenteeism in the police service, and on no less than three occasions got on to the subject," it said. Promotion should be refused until he "learns to temper his enthusiasm with professionalism".

Street Of Shame

THE traditions he established at the *Sunday Times* remain alive and well at Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill's thrusting *Scotsman*. As staff morale followed the sales graph off the cliff, this "correction" appeared in the 18 December issue:

"There were several inaccuracies in an article headlined 'Treatment can save patients' anguish' (14 December). Susan Guy did not say what she was quoted as saying, and never agreed to be interviewed, or have her photograph used, in relation to that study. She was interviewed over another matter, but never used the words attributed to her. We apologise to Ms Guy, and to our readers."

For an encore Brillo then sacked *Scotsman* editor Rebecca "Fluffy" Hardy, a former *Daily Mail* showbiz hackette, just as she prepared to fly off on her Christmas holiday.

Brillo has now gone through a record-breaking five editors at the *Hootsmon* since his triumphant return to his native land. Number six, a spotty and hitherto inoffensive juvenile political hack called Iain Martin, is clearly unfamiliar with the phrase "poisoned chalice". He is, however, blessed with a physical inability to utter the word "No" in Neill's presence. This should see him through to, oh, February at least – or until the Barclay brothers, Brillo's inexplicably indulgent patrons, come to their senses

IN THE week the *Telegraph* announced it was sacking 40 hacks, *Torygraph* editor Charles Moore made a convenient trip to America (business class, *naturellement*) to interview US secretary of state Colin Powell.

Moore's transatlantic flight was not a tactful decision for a newspaper pleading penury, particularly as Powell had been in London at the beginning of the week to meet the prime minister at Downing Street.

Meanwhile *Torygraph* staff who have also been greeted with news of a pay freeze were cheered by an internal management publication, "Vital Statistics", which boasted: "The *Telegraph*'s investment in journalistic excellence and exciting promotions… has in the last year alone increased our 15-44 adult readership by 14.1% for The Daily Telegraph (Mon-Sat), 19.4% for The Daily Telegraph (Sat), 16.7% for The Sunday Telegraph." So where has all the money gone?

FATHERHOOD seems to have mellowed the Dirty Digger, who celebrated Christmas by sending a fond email to his countless galley-slaves around the world.

"As we approach the end of an eventful year, I want to express my appreciation for both your day-to-day contributions and your extraordinary efforts… My hope is that News Corp is not only a global network of businesses but a worldwide family of men and women who make those businesses excel. Indeed, our response to the events of this year has been that of a family: we have steadied and reinforced each other…"

And, er, sacked each other. Or, as Murdoch puts it: "Our cost-cutting measure are proving to be invaluable [*sic*]… Unfortunately, they have also entailed sacrifices."

Still, those family members who survive will be delighted to know that Uncle Rupert wants to keep in touch. "I intend to write to you regularly in 2002, and I invite anybody who wishes to respond to me personally to do so at Rupert.Murdoch@newscorp.com … I wish you and your families the very happiest holidays."

And God bless us, one and all.

THE sinister relationship between Mohamed "Phoney Pharaoh" Fayed and Richard "Dirty" Desmond is clearly blossoming, to judge by the latest sycophantic puff piece in the *Sunday Express*'s media slot.

The column is presided over by Anil Bhoyrul, the sometime City Slicker who was given a job by Fayed on *Punch* after being sacked from the *Mirror* for gross misconduct. According to his wholly objective account in the *Sexpress*, *Punch* is booming and Fayed's "long running investment may finally have paid off with circulation rocketing 24 percent to 42,000 in the space of three months… The turnaround is a huge boost for Harrods boss Al Fayed."

Alas, the success story is not reflected on *Punch*'s super soaraway website, where admiring visitors can read the regular column in which "Mohamed Al Fayed, the philosopher behind *Punch*, shares his proprietorial views". The views are apparently so fascinating that the *Punch* webmaster last updated them back in September.

ON THE biggest news day in recent history, Tuesday 11 September, the editor of the *Independent* Simon Kelner was on honeymoon and his deputy Ian Birrell edited the paper in his absence.

Just to rub the fact in Birrell has now hung the *Indy's* front pages from that week above his desk, carefully positioned so that Kelner can see them from his office.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Cliff [Richard] "has nothing but praise for the likes of chart-toppers Steps and Atomic Kitten".

— Page 18, *Daily Express*, 11 December.

Cliff has "attacked pop bands such as Steps and Westlife for not writing their own pop songs".

— Page 29, *Daily Express*, 11 December.

SECURITY at London's Canary Wharf is tight since the attack on the World Trade Centre.

So tight that a hack on the wharf-based *Daily Telegraph*, off for a weekend's shooting, walked straight past the guards permanently stationed in the lobby of the skyscraper carrying a box of ammunition marked "Highly Explosive".

SPOTTED in *heat* magazine's "Say What?" column, devoted to noteworthy quotations from celebs: "'You wake up in the morning and you look at your old spoon and you say to yourself, "Mick, it's time to get yourself a new spoon." And you do.' Mick Jagger takes cutlery very seriously."

Say what, indeed? Lord Gnome is delighted to learn that his "Me and My Spoon" feature is now regarded as a trusted source.

"More Tae-Kwando, Vicar?"

HACKWATCH AWARDS FOR 2001

Kamikaze champion

Winner: Stephen Pollard, who, on his last day at the Grey Lubyanka before taking up a post on the *Times*, wrote a *Daily Express* editorial on organic farming which was carefully crafted so that the first letter of every sentence spelt out FUCK YOU DESMOND. Alas! Pollard's new employer, *Times* editor Peter Stothard, was unamused – and sacked the wretched hack before he had even started.

Gob-stopping humbug award

Winner: Sally Farmiloe. When the *Daily Star* exposed her affair with Jeffrey Archer in December 1999, a distraught Farmiloe announced that she was "consulting my lawyers" about this terrible invasion of her privacy. In February 2000 she wrote to the *Eye* angrily denying that she might ever cooperate with a tabloid ("disgraceful lies"). When approached by a *Daily Mail* hack at the Bafta awards in February 2001 she repeated this pious refrain: "I can't talk about Jeffrey." Two weeks later, over no fewer than five pages of the *News of the Screws*, Sally revealed all about her "romps" and "sex games" with milord Archer. At the end of this epic and lucrative unburdening, with no hint of irony, she complained: "Jeffrey betrays all those close to him in the end."

Runner-up: The shock-horror front-page splash in the *Daily Star* (prop. Richard Desmond) about a "slimy" boss who allegedly "offered a pretty teenage cleaner £6,000 to strip naked in his office". The *Star*'s main objection was probably the generosity of the fee, to judge by the Fantasy121.com website (prop. R. Desmond), which includes such items as this: "It's hard to believe that we found Shaheeda in the slums of Bombay in India. She was begging in the streets so we offered her $100 to strip for us."

Runner-up: "I met Princess Margaret 40 years ago, almost to the month, and we have remained constant friends ever since. I like to think I am one of a group whose prime concern is to protect the Princess by our silence." (Angela Huth, at the start of a 3,500-word feature on "Margaret, my very private friend" in the *Daily Telegraph*.)

"Peter's Friends" award (1)

"One man must do well in next week's Cabinet reshuffle. Step up, Peter Mandelson — the minister between portfolios. Mandelson is not liked by many in his party. They think he's too full of himself. That's nonsense… Peter Mandelson's ideally qualified to be in the Cabinet." — *Sun* editorial, July 1998.

"He [Mandelson] is out on his ear again because he is a lying, manipulative, oily, two-faced, nasty piece of work who should never have been allowed near the government in the first place." — *Sun* editorial, January 2001.

'Peter's Friends' award (2)

"Mr Mandelson is not going to resign again or be fired… He is a brilliant tactician who is doing a vital job in Northern Ireland very well – and someone who will be a key figure in helping Tony Blair win a second term in office." — *Daily Mirror* editorial, October 2000.

"Few tears will be shed for Peter Mandelson… He will doubtless have a successful and glittering life. But it will not — must not — be in politics." — *Daily Mirror* editorial, January 2001.

Correction of the Year

Winner: "Last week, *The Lawyer* incorrectly stated that Maurice Millen, who was leaving DAC to join Macfarlanes, was a senior lawyer. Millen was DAC's head of IT. We apologise to the two firms for any inconvenience this may have caused. We would also like to apologise to Millen for any embarrassment caused by calling him a lawyer." — *The Lawyer*.

Runner-up: "*Sport Focus* apologises for getting its wires crossed last week, and would like to make the following correction to 'Quote of the Week'. Saddam Hussein is not the England cricket captain… We meant to say Nasser Hussain." — *Sport Focus*.

Special auto-arslikhan award

"What England would not give for a Barrington or a Boycott who would bat all day." — Geoffrey Boycott, *Daily Telegraph*, 6 August.

Simile of the year

"Breasts are a lot like love and Louis Vuitton bags. It's important to know the difference between the real thing and the phoney. But sometimes it's difficult to tell." — Tony Parsons, *Daily Mirror*, 8 January 2001.

"Heroes are becoming a lot like love or Louis Vuitton bags. Increasingly we can't tell the difference between the fake and the real thing." — Tony Parsons, *Daily Mirror*, 12 March 2001.

Understatement award

Winner: Gorblimey specialist Richard Littlejohn of the *Sun*, for putting the case of "metric martyr" Steve Thorburn into perspective: "It's just a short step from arresting greengrocers to loading the trains to Belsen."

Runner-up: the *Sunday Telegraph*, for this thoughtful analysis. "Kate Winslet's surrender to a dieting regime last week captured the mood of the nation."

Best election-date predictions

"Why I believe Mr Blair will go to the electorate in April, not May." — Michael Brown, *Independent*, 17 January.

"A note of exaggeration has been heard in some reporting… Preposterous suggestions have been made, for example, that the general election will be deferred [from May]." — *Guardian* editorial, 28 February.

"The general election WILL be held on 3 May despite opposition from some farmers, the *Sun* can reveal today." — Trevor Kavanagh, the *Sun*, 20 March.

"There will, beyond the teensiest whisper of a soupcon of a shadow of doubt, be a general election on 3 May… If that man [Blair] is not in Windsor by early next week, kissing hands and asking for a dissolution, then I will eat my hat garnished with bacon from Heddon-on-the-Wall." — Boris Johnson, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 March.

"*SUN* EXCLUSIVE…Now it's 7 June as Blair puts country before party." — Trevor Kavanagh, the *Sun*, 31 March.

Best post-election predictions

"Labour certainly cannot assume another landslide Commons majority… My hunch remains that Labour's majority will fall, to perhaps 50 to 80." — Peter Riddell, the *Times*, 11 January 2001.

"Robin Cook has won his battle to save his job after the election – smashing Jack Straw's hopes of becoming foreign secretary… Home secretary Mr Straw will either become education secretary or head a new ministry of transport and environment in a post-election shuffle." — "Exclusive" by George Pascoe-Watson, the *Sun*, 2 April.

Best Dumpsterism

"Royal Ascot is about as likely to take place this June as my Aunt Fanny's betrothal to the Prince of Wales." — Nigel Dempster, *Daily Mail*, 2 April.

"Dempster's Royal Ascot Diary." — *Daily Mail* strapline all through Ascot week in June. What happened to Aunt Fanny's marriage plans remains a mystery.

Arslikhan of the year

Interviewed by Simon Mayo on Radio 5 Live, the *Sun*'s Trevor Kavanagh was asked who he'd put on postage stamps if he ran the country. "Rupert Murdoch," the *Sun* man replied without hesitation. "He's a hero of mine."

Consistency award

"Kenneth Clarke and Iain Duncan Smith would each divide, rather than unite, the party." — *Sun* editorial, 10 July.

"Iain Duncan Smith… is a decent man the whole Tory party can believe in, a man for whom the party can campaign wholeheartedly." — *Sun* editorial, 18 July.

Memo of the year

"Dear all — There is an almost total absence of story ideas coming from the newsroom at the moment… I am simply not prepared to sit here every day, trying to create a newspaper from thin air. I would welcome your comments." — *Cri de coeur* from *Indie* news editor Adam Leigh to his hacks.

Lunchtime O'Booze award

This valuable trophy is awarded to the *Daily Telegraph*'s racing editor Adrian Hunt, who, at a beano in the *Telegraph* hospitality box at Royal Ascot, congratulated the paper's star columnist Lord (Sebastian) Coe on his success at the 1980 Olympics. Unfortunately, Hunt seemed to think that he was talking to Coe's old rival Steve Ovett. "It was great when you beat that tosser Coe," he roared, before being led away by sports editor David Welch.

Best news values

Winner: Yet another triumph for Richard "Dirty" Desmond's empire, with a late entry from *OK!* magazine. "NEWS IN FOCUS: JADE JAGGER PUTS HER BAG ON HER SHOULDER." The story is illustrated by two photos which do indeed show Jade Jagger carrying a shoulder-bag. We look forward to equally riveting follow-ups in 2002 — "Jade Jagger has red blood cells", perhaps, or "Jade Jagger remains alive by breathing".

Critic of the year

The undisputed winner is Mr Giles Foden, deputy literary editor of the *Grauniad*, for his epic G2 cover story on Eminem. Foden likened the rapper's lyrics (sample: "*Bitch, I'ma kill you! You don't wanna fuck with me/Girls neither – you ain't nuttin' but a slut to me*") to the verse of Tennyson, Hardy, Kipling, Frost, Pound and, above all, Browning. "But who is he, really?" Foden mused. "Like the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, with his quiverful of pseudonyms, like the coy Eliot of Prufrock, or Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' – 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)', Eminem is a multiple, elusive experience, one that folds about itself like his near palindromic name…"

Inspector Clouseau prize

Winner: Paul McMullan of the *News of the Screws*. Following the scandal of a north London hospital which employed a cleaner with TB, undercover hack McMullan applied for a job as a porter at the same hospital and was duly hired without any health checks or basic hygiene training. "Great scoop!" he thought. On his first day at work McMullan was teamed up with a porter who had joined a few days earlier and would show him the ropes. Alas, the man in question was… an undercover hack from the *Sunday Mirror*.

Runner-up: Observer hackette Amelia "Nice But Dim" Hill, who revealed that children "as young as six" were being brought from Africa and the Far East and sold into prostitution in Britain. Although she conspicuously failed to find any six-year-olds, she did manage to interview some older Vietnamese prostitutes who came to Britain from France. Asked where she lived in France, one of the girls started to reply: "J'habite…" Back at the office, Hill sought help from *Observer* librarians. "I've been looking on a map for this French town called Jabite," she sighed, "but I can't find it anywhere."

IN THE TEAROOM

"IF YOU want to get on, be more like Hoon and Byers." This formulation, now known around Westminster as "MacShane's Law", was first articulated by junior foreign office minister Denis MacShane in his now notorious interview with Lord Ahmed of Rotherham, from which the Muslim peer came away believing the spooks were bugging his mobile phone.

Just how to apply MacShane's Law in the daily business of political life has now become the chief topic of debate at the Labour end of the tearoom. Should one, for instance, follow transport secretary Stephen Byers' example and cultivate a reputation for missing free kicks at an open goal? After all, any halfway decent politician should have been able to parlay the return of Railtrack to public ownership into national hero status and have himself cheered through the termini of England by a grateful travelling public. But somehow Byers made a botch of it.

Or, perhaps, one should cultivate that combination of anxious deference (towards the prime minister) and preening arrogance (towards everyone else) that is the mark of defence secretary Geoff Hoon, hanging on Tony Blair's coat-tails at press conferences, always the usher – never the bridegroom? No, all that's necessary to make MacShane's Law operational is, whatever one may say in private, to send frequent political signals that one is on the PM's side against the chancellor.

MacShane's bosses in the foreign office have certainly caught on. Foreign secretary Jack Straw and Europe minister Peter Hain were both appointed because of their reputation for mild Euroscepticism. Yet both came back from Brussels two weeks ago as sudden converts to the cause of the euro (so long as Tony's comfortable with it) and pressing for an early referendum (so long as that's what Tony wants). Shocked cabinet colleagues thought they'd been taken prisoner by their officials. In fact, they'd fallen under the spell of their junior minister's winsome doctrine of political opportunism.

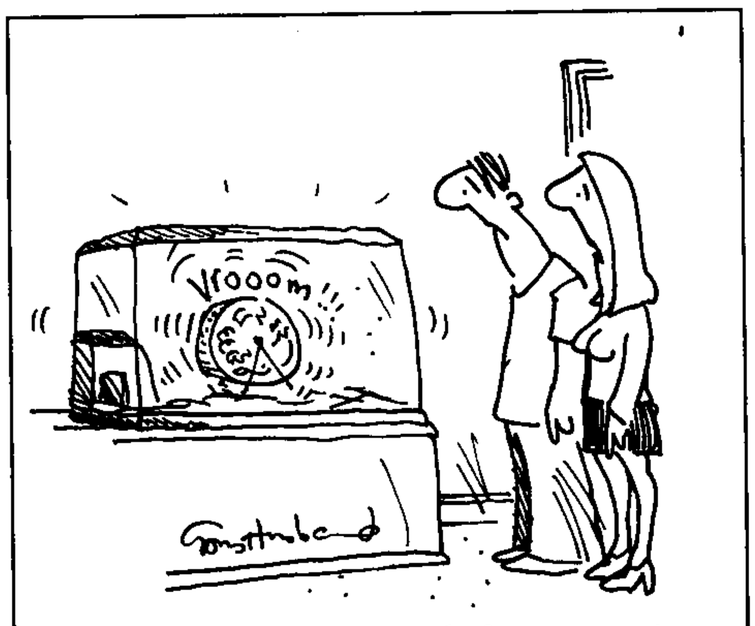
No one is more shocked by the foreign secretary's volte face than the leader of the House, Robin Cook, who was himself dumped from the FO for espousing identical opinions. Yet Cook himself is dithering on the brink of a similar somersault. Either he seizes the hour and grabs a place in the history books as the Great Reforming Leader who restores power and authority to parliament and trims the wings of the overweening executive, or he becomes more like Hoon and Byers, watering down parliamentary reform and smarming up to the boss. It's a dilemma he hasn't quite resolved yet, but recent signals suggest MacShane's Law is winning out.

'Urquhart'

WHAT better demonstration of democracy in action than MPs explaining to their constituents how national policy will work on a local level?

In this vein Labour MP for Cambridge Anne Campbell recently issued a press release to welcome the proposals on police reform put forward by a home office white paper. In the release she was quoted thus: "MP said, 'Crime has fallen under Labour, but detection and conviction rates are too low and the public do not always feel safe in our communities… Labour is determined to drive change that is felt on the ground. The people of (constituency) will be the judge and jury of whether police reform works."

Surely Ms Campbell's office didn't just take a general statement issued by the spin doctors at central office and release it to local media forgetting even to insert the name of their MP or her constituency?



"What do you mean you hid your cocaine supply in the hamster's cage?"

WHAT is the role of the PPS – the parliamentary private secretary? Mainly, it seems, to plant tame questions for their ministers.

For example, a batch of pliant MPs have recently received a letter from three PPSs to education ministers: David Lammy, PPS to education secretary Estelle Morrisp; Vernon Coaker, PPS to Stephen Timms, school standards minister; and Michael Foster, PPS to Margaret Hodge, higher education minister.

The letter thanked the MPs for agreeing to table questions on education matters and enclosed a "suggested question which will need to be tabled by 5pm on Thursday 13 December for answer on Thursday 10 January 2002. If you are successful in the ballot we will ensure that you receive an appropriate briefing by hand or by letter board on the preceding Wednesday or Thursday."

The briefing, when it arrives, will set out in detail the magnificent achievements of education ministers. The competition to ask oral questions of ministers is intense, and this regular planting and fixing of questions the ministers want to answer obviously makes it more difficult for MPs who want to ask their own questions to climb high in the ranking order.

LITTLE sign of lament in Labour ranks at the departure of anti-war MP Paul Marsden for the Liberal Democrat benches.

Along with plenty of crude smears from erstwhile comrades – Marsden has been described variously as "cracked", "100 percent bonkers", etc – is one amusing tale of his time as a rookie member of the army parliamentary scheme. This allows MPs to experience life as members of the armed services, but Marsden proved a remarkably poor recruit.

On arrival in Romania to take part in an army exercise, he availed himself too liberally of the local hooch on the first evening, and by the following morning, still clearly tired and emotional, Marsden could not contain himself. "He spent the whole f*****g day puking out of the Land Rover window," recalls one former comrade with a chuckle.

PETER Mandelson was keen to prove his Zionist credentials during his recent visit to Jerusalem, where he addressed the Israel Britain and the Commonwealth Association.

Speaking at the Balfour Day dinner, Mandy boasted that his grandfather Herbert Morrison was not only "a very strong Zionist supporter" but also gave more tangible help to those campaigning for a Jewish state in Palestine by bringing "an extra piece of luggage" when he visited the country in 1935. "This baggage contained weapons for the Stern Gang, which on arrival here was detached from his baggage and taken away… I'm only slightly embarrassed to say that my grandfather played some part, unwittingly, in furnishing the armed struggle with weapons brought unknowingly by him from London!"

Quite how Herbert Morrison could have smuggled in a case of arms "unwittingly" was not explained. Equally puzzling is Mandy's light-hearted banter about the Stern Gang, especially in a speech which was fiercely critical of Palestinian terrorism. Could this gang by any chance be related to the terrorist group of that name which blew up the King David Hotel and murdered British soldiers?

THE NON-PRODUCTIVITY PANEL

LONG before the last election Geoffrey Robinson, then paymaster-general, recruited the finest brains from the City and business to sit on the public services and productivity panel. In 1999 and 2000 these tyros produced 12 reports on how to improve public services.

Dame Sheila Masters, a partner in the accountancy firm KPMG, chaired a group that investigated outpatient departments in hospitals. By the time her report came out early last year, Dame Sheila was a peeress, Lady Noakes, and her report was warmly welcomed by health secretary Alan Milburn.

Then came Incentives for Change, a stirring document proposing "significant changes to the performance incentives for staff in the big four government office networks" – the Benefits Agency, HM Customs and Excise, the Employment Service and Inland Revenue. The author was John Makinson, group finance director of media giant, Pearsons.

In April last year the panel ponitificated on improving police performance. The author was Clare Spottiswoode, former gas regulator. Ministers like Andrew Smith and Charles Clarke praised the report.

Not much later, in July last year, came the long-awaited report on "effective reporting in education" which praised the department for education for its progress and sagacity. The author was one of the most influential businessmen in the country, John Mayo, finance director of Marconi.

In the late summer of last year the reports suddenly dried up. The innovative business chiefs had returned to business. Geoffrey Robinson had been sacked from government and went back to his business in Coventry, which was under investigation by the department of trade. Robinson was also in trouble with the parliamentary standards commissioner over his former business connections with Robert Maxwell. Baroness Noakes went back to KPMG, which is still trying to unravel the mess it should have foreseen when KPMG audited the accounts at the bust insurance company Independent. John Makinson went back to take charge of finance at Pearson, which has just reported a profits slide of 40 percent. John Mayo went back to Marconi, which duly recorded the worst losses in its history. Mayo was sacked.

In September last year ministers recruited a new bunch to help improve public services. They include the former minister currently advising the prime minister, Lord Simon (BP), current minister Lord Sainsbury (Sainsbury's) and Clare Spottiswoode again. When appointed to the panel Spottiswoode was vice chair of Azurix, better known as Wessex Water, a subsidiary of the world-wide Enron group. When Enron and all its subsidiaries went bust last month Ms Spottiswoode assured the *Observer* that she had left Azurix because she was not happy with the state of the accounts there. Strangely, there was no word of this unhappiness when she left the water company in February 1999.

"I have enjoyed my time at Azurix immensely," she said in a press release. "The people there have provided a tremendous stimulus and I have been most impressed by their determination to embrace and stimulate change in the water business."

In the 15 months since the crack new team was appointed the public services productivity panel has not produced a single report.

HOW PRIVATE FINANCE DOESN'T WORK

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The formal hand-over last month of the largest privately financed hospital in the UK, built by Balfour Beatty, was marred by the prospect of massive future job cuts as the Lothian University Hospitals NHS Trust faced a debt totalling £38m. The trust managers intend to make cuts of £4m a year over the next five years, so locals can look forward to slashed staff budgets. The overspend came from "unexpected" building costs and charges for medical equipment.

Croydon council "strategic outsourcing". This collapsed last month when a council spokesman said of the £100m office services contract with Crapita: "It has become clear that the extent of risk which Croydon is now requiring Capita to assume within the contract is not commensurate with the anticipated reward." Yes, Capita wanted more money.

Brent council schools PFI. The London borough of Brent abandoned a multi-million pound PFI education project in October because it did not provide value for money. Brent councillors decided to dump the project, costed at £23m, after spending two years considering it. The final two bids, from Jarvis and Accord, were extremely high, possibly more than £40m.

Kent county council PPP. A £100m deal between the county council and Hyder Business Services collapsed in September after 10 months of negotiations. The Tory-led council was unhappy with the value for money offered by HBS for the 10-year "partnership" to take over council services including information, technology, finance and personnel. There was also a dispute over the price Kent was paying in comparison to the level of risk HBS was prepared to take on.

The Halifax hospital PFI. When the nice new PFI hospital was opened last spring there were 200 people in Halifax on the waiting list. But not any more.

The new hospital has 614 beds, compared with 823 in the three hospitals it replaced. As a result waiting lists have soared to more than 1,000, including 147 people who have been waiting for treatment more than six months. The panic-stricken health authority has shelled out huge sums of taxpayers' money to BUPA to pay for care at the BUPA hospital at Elland. (Delighted BUPA bosses are planning to expand the hospital and pay for it with the new government hand-out.) An emergency ward in the century-old Halifax General Hospital, which the new PFI hospital was built to replace, has also been reopened to meet the desperate bed shortage directly caused by PFI. The ward, which takes 25 patients, is overflowing.

"Trust me, I'm a spin doctor"

COURT CIRCULAR

TO VISIT, or not to visit, that was the question. Or at least that was the question being chewed over by the Queen's senior flunkeys as her daughter-in-law lay in hospital recovering from an ectopic pregnancy. For Brenda, of course, there was no question about the answer. Brenda doesn't do hospital visits, especially to relatives.

But the hapless palace media folk had come up with a plan to send Brenda to Sophie's bedside armed with flowers and grapes, which they could then present as her moment of reconciliation with the erring countess after her indiscretions with the *News of the World*'s fake sheikh. Anyone thinking this might have been a bit too clever for the palace press office to come up with all by itself would be right. They were given the idea for such a masterstroke by Prince Edward, who considers himself a bit of a media whizzkid.

The daft plan was quickly scotched by Sir Robin Janvrin, the Queen's private secretary, who also refused permission for a press release to be issued stating that Brenda had sent a handwritten letter and flowers to the Wessex girl. Janvrin was annoyed that Brenda was being used as a means to rehabilitate the Wessexes after this year's PR disasters.

Edward, who has been orchestrating the couple's "renaissance", has felt the palace hierarchy closing in on him lately. Which may explain why one television executive and his PR firm director wife in particular didn't receive invitations to Brenda's reception for the broadcasting industry on 28 November. Other royal media experts such as, er, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and the Duke of Kent took their place.

Down on the Fish Farm

IT'S business as usual in the world of fake fish farming. Hundreds of empty and potentially dioxin-contaminated feed bags have been illegally burnt on the Skye foreshore sending clouds of muck over the township of Uig; dead Skye salmon unfit for human consumption are allegedly being "minced up" and sold as an additive in the cosmetics industry; and diseased hatchery salmon have been stocked into rearing cages in a once-pristine Inverness-shire freshwater loch.

Allan Berry, former chairman of the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers, whose call for an independent public inquiry into this dirty business was rejected by the Scottish executive (SE), has now accused the SE of environmental fraud. He said: "Given the stench of corruption and contamination emanating from salmon farming, an independent inquiry is the only way to restore the credibility of the executive and public confidence in parliament."

Meanwhile SE fisheries boss Ross Finnie has lost another helper. His beleaguered deputy Rhona Brankin was filleted during new first minister Jack McConnell's recent night of the long fish knives. And elsewhere the pressure seems to be mounting too. Shortly before giving evidence to the Scottish parliament's rolling inquiry into fish farming, with Lord Jamie Lindsay, chief executive of SQS (Scottish Quality Salmon) by his side, Bruce Mainland, the boss of Aquacost Ltd in Orkney, was fined £1,000 for refusing to leave a bar after closing time, shouting and swearing and punching a policewoman. Mr Mainland was said to have no recollection of the incident.

Star of the month, though, was whistleblower Dr Richard Shelton, for 20 years head of the government's freshwater fisheries research lab at Pitlochry. Shelton, also giving evidence to the inquiry, "blasted" his former employer, called for an immediate moratorium on fish farm development; blamed salmon farming for the deaths of wild salmon and sea-trout and highlighted the risks chemicals used by fish farmers to control sea lice infestations pose to shellfish. Better late than never, Dick.

'Old Trout'

LEGAL NEWS

THE law lords, overturning a decision of the court of appeal, have released Donald Pendleton from prison, a man wrongly convicted in 1986 of the murder of a newspaper seller in 1971.

As the *Eye* reported in July last year when Mr Pendleton was trying to convince the appeal court to free him, so long had been the delay between the murder and Mr Pendleton's original trial that he could not remember that at the time he had provided police with a statement and an alibi – both of which had been lost.

The main case against him was that he had confessed to the murder. But for 14 years he protested that his confession was false and had been made under duress, and that he had nothing to do with the murder. His lawyers eventually took him to a prominent psychologist who said he had "serious reservations about the reliability of the self-incriminating admissions". But the appeal court (Lord Justice Pill, Mr Justice Sachs and Mrs Justice Steel) decided this and other important new evidence would not have been accepted by a jury and so dismissed the appeal.

When Mr Pendleton went back to prison, Jim Nichol, his solicitor, said: "Don Pendleton must be the only man in jail convicted of murder without a jury. The appeal judges simply substituted themselves for a jury and found him guilty. How can that be right?"

Mr Nichol has now been vindicated by the House of Lords where, on 13 December, all five law lords overruled the court of appeal and quashed the conviction. An important issue was the degree to which the court of appeal judges can assess fresh evidence by substituting themselves for a jury. Lord Bingham said: "Trial by jury does not mean trial by jury in the first instance and trial by judges in the court of appeal in the second."

The court of appeal, he insisted, "must not intrude into territory which properly belongs to the jury". He went on to stress that "no one can be sure" what would have happened if the psychiatrist's evidence about Don Pendleton had been available to the jury. In trying to substitute itself for the jury, "the court of appeal strayed beyond its true function of review and made findings which were not open to it in all the circumstances. Indeed, it came perilously close to considering whether the appellant, in its judgment, was guilty".

The lords view that the appeal court cannot masquerade as a jury should have a profound effect on many "fresh evidence" cases still waiting to be decided on appeal.

VETERAN left-wing lawyer Geoffrey Bindman has been fined £12,000 (plus £7,000 costs) by the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal for "severe conflicts of interest" and "improperly passing on confidential information". The charges relate to a successful libel suit brought against the *Eye* by Bindman a few years ago on behalf of Sam Yeboah, the former head of personnel at Hackney council.

"Geoffrey Bindman has contributed greatly to the profession for many years," a spokesman for the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors told the Law Society's *Gazette*, "and it is sad that someone of his eminence should not only appear before a tribunal, but have the allegations against him proven."

Sad, but not surprising: the Curse of Gnome always gets its man in the end.

ITV

Turn Of The Year Report (all channels)

THIS was probably the most routine Christmas Day schedule in television history. At peak-time on the day which has become more associated in Britain with TV than with Jesus, BBC2 was showing a documentary about Charlie Drake, while ITV aimed a Stars In Their Eyes Special at those cross-eyed with alcohol. Later at night, a repeat of Porridge took on a Graham Norton re-run.

The impression given that no one in tellyland believes in Santa anymore is slightly misleading. Oddly, on Boxing Day four pieces of original programming slugged it out. What's happened is that the bosses have research from the marketing department showing that, on Christmas Day, our Darren wants the box to play his FIFA 2002 game or, if he doesn't, Auntie Doreen fancies watching the Pearl Harbor DVD she's just been given. The telly is no longer just a telly.

This trend is usefully symbolic of the problems of the programme-makers as they go into a new year. Actually, in the jargon, they're not even allowed to call themselves programme-makers anymore but "content-providers". This is in preparation for the dream that the companies will in future provide on-line material through the "broad-band" box in the corner or down our third generation mobile phones.

Unfortunately stock in these super-phones has taken more baths than Lady Macbeth so, for the moment, let's judge the content-providers on what they did as programme-makers during 2001.

ITV1 had by far the worst time, its difficulties indicated by that switch of name which happened during the year. Intended to give an impression of expansion in preparation for the great world of content-provision, the trick backfired. Almost no viewers know that there is an ITV2 while ITV1 offered a series of flops.

The £183m spent to create The Premiership, which survived in peak-time for only a few weeks, must be the worst business decision in television for some decades and the humiliated Desmond Lynam will turn up in the dreams of young presenters, clanking his golden handcuffs, as the Ghost Of Telly Fame Past.

Survivor – a failed attempt to make Big Brother bigger – was another in a string of so many dogs that ITV chief executive David Liddiment may next be seen running kennels in Battersea. There was good stuff – Bob And Rose, Othello – which the BBC would have been happy to have had, but those shows failed to get the ratings. It's not just the

"Thank goodness, she's finally crashed"

Premiership fiasco which has led to ITV1 becoming known in an industry joke as ITV Nil.

The second half of that gag – BBC1 – ended the year with champagne in the fridge after controller Lorraine Heggessey achieved the best ratings for years. The problem was that you had an odd sense this year of the channels turning into each other.

While Liddiment did a BBC with prestige shows which nobody much watched and failed attempts at populism, Heggessy did an ITV: piling up viewers with shows which no one could remember a few days later or which sounded like a joke: for example, Rolf Harris on the impressionists. In fact, terrifyingly, the only BBC1 shows which stick in the mind at all are Walking With Beasts and The Way We Live Now, both imitations of previous hits which did not quite as well as the models.

BBC2 did have some fresh stuff – The Office, The Kumars at Number 42 – but a management anecdote reveals the biggest problem facing the corporation as it enters 2002. In early January, all the BBC controllers (including those running the new 3 and 4 services) will move into a new suite of offices at Television Centre. This office space was created to a plan from Mark Thompson, BBC director of television. Unfortunately, when the controllers arrive to be near him, he'll be far away. For the second time in five years (after Michael Jackson), the BBC has suddenly lost the person who has spent two years tailoring the creative future to their own design.

Both of them went to Channel 4 which, like the previous networks discussed, also had a year in which it seemed to be doing what used to be the job of the viewer: switching sides. Channel 4 seemed to be morphing into a combination of Channel 5 (lots of documentaries about sex and high-profile criminals) and the Virgin Group: suddenly putting money into online betting shops and the like.

Feeling more like a media business than the public service broadcaster it was set up to be – shamingly, The West Wing, one of the great achievements of American television, was scheduled increasingly late at night because of low ratings – the channel ended the year with a serious identity crisis which Mark Thompson needs to address rapidly.

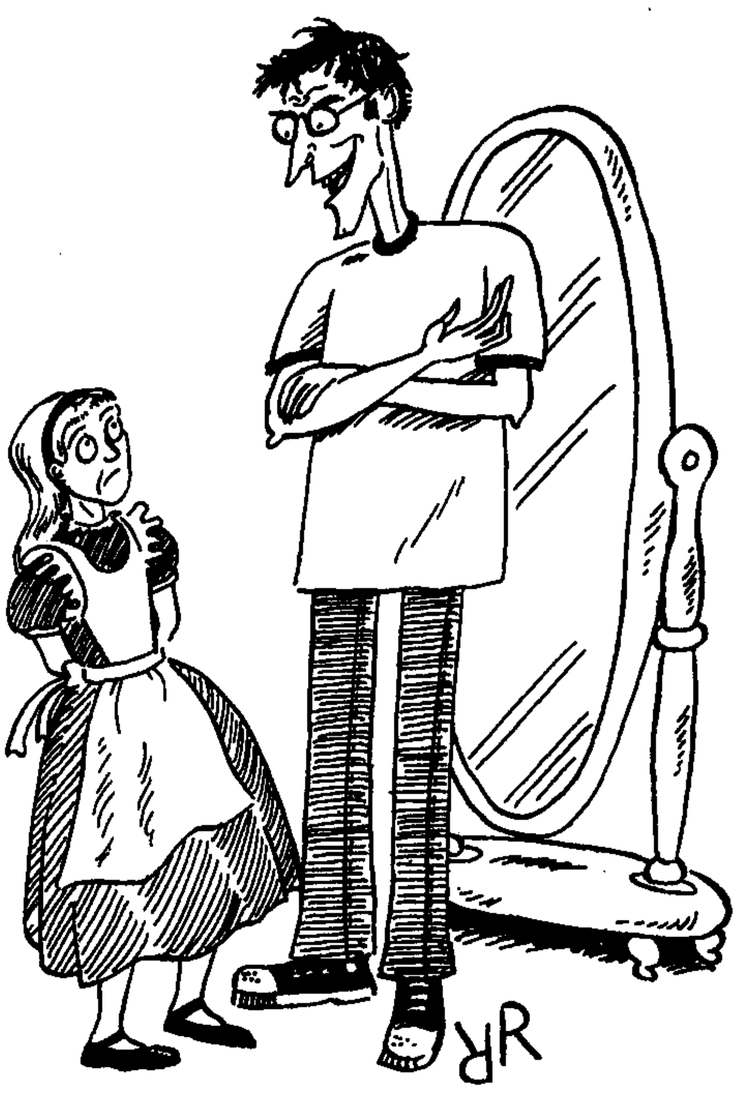
Channel 5 remained a smarter business proposition than an artistic one: a niche filth-and-trivia channel for younger viewers offering the kind of shows you used to have to fly the Atlantic to see: such as Cleo Worldwide in which Cleo Rocos talks to B-list celebs in foreign locations and I Am A Talk-Show Survivor where we learn about American "after-care" for traumatised chat-show guests.

Sky has the difficulty of having built its whole pitch around televised football at a time when there were the first signs that the market is saturated with matches.

Whether you call them programme-makers or content-providers, there was little to provide contentment this year for those who run channels.

'Square Eyes'

Theroux The Looking Glass



"Let me join you, Alice – I'm not just a journalist, I'm a friend..."

MEDIA NEWS

MORE cracks are appearing in ITN's "news" operation following the 20 percent budget cut. So far 75 staff have taken voluntary redundancy, and at least 30 more are facing compulsory arrangements. In all 10 percent of the workforce will go.

Presenters already complain they now have to do their own make-up and hair. Producers meanwhile are spending more and more time repackaging old news clips instead of chasing new stories. ITV's morning bulletins are seldom much more than rehashes of the previous night's *News at Ten*. All of which is good news for Rupert Murdoch's Sky News, which looks positively lavish and professional by comparison.

At present Murdoch stands no chance of taking over ITV's news coverage. But there's nothing to stop him continuing to put in ridiculously low bids for it, thus pulling the rug from under ITN's feet. How long before the regulators change the rules about foreign ownership and let Murdoch in through the back door?

PS: Meanwhile on the Beeb's hard-hitting Breakfast News, Jeremy Bowen has fearlessly anchored more top stories: do skate or whiting might make a tasty alternative to cod – and how best to address Christmas cards?

AND WATCHING CHANNEL 5
SCHEDULES
Sun: FILM: Bad American actresses Yank them off.
Mon: The Mole.
FILM: Blood, Tits & Gore.
Tue: Open House with Gloria Hunniford.
Sadists' Hour.
Wed: FILM: Cheap Soft Porn 6.
The Comedy Store.
Thur: Sex and Shopping.
FILM: Confessions of an actor whose career died in the 70's.
Fri: Russell Grant's postcard.
Transvestite Mrs & Mrs.
Sat: Self-abuse For old Hands.
FILM: Big Breasts, Little Plot.

AS the estimated cost of the new Scottish Parliament building soars from its original £10m towards the £300m mark, when will the BBC's fearless hacks investigate this great boondoggle?

An early *Panorama* idea for a double-bill feature on Holyrood and the millennium dome was quickly spiked. (Or should that be "dyked"?) Then someone in the BBC who was unhappy at the decision suggested to author David Black, whose book on the scandal was published last May, that he should contact BBC Scotland's fearless investigative programme *Frontline*. He was invited to lunch in Glasgow and commissioned to write a preliminary treatment, for which he was paid. Hearing nothing more, he rang *Frontline* and was told that thre story "didn't work" for television.

The story that apparently *does* work for television is an account of the chaotic saga charmingly entitled *The Gathering Place*. This will be made for the BBC by production company Wark-Clements – whose co-owner, feisty *Newsnight* presenter Kirsty Wark, just happened to be a member of the panel which selected the winning design for the disastrous project. The commission has caused some disquiet among other programme makers who feel they could have made rather more objective documentaries for a fraction of the cost. But director Stuart Greig insists Kirsty will be a "hands-off" participant, and that it won't be a smarmy *mélange* of propaganda and apologia – even if it will be a nice little earner for the lady herself.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1/2

Anne Robinson: Which oriental country shares its name with a type of porcelain?

Contestant: Portugal.

AR: Which Indian leader, whose last name began with G, took the name Mahatma?

Contestant: Geronimo.

AR: What K is the currency of Sweden?

Contestant: Kennel.

AR: The presenter of the television series Telly Addicts was Noel who?

Contestant: Coward.

GREG DYKE's "less money on suits/more on programmes" crusade is about to hit the BBC's "marketing and communications" department where a glance at the "project thrusts overview" confirms that old Birtist habits die hard.

Take the "Thrust Team" for example, charged with a series of "external facing" and "internal ablers" tasks, whatever they are. A team of 61 people are busy working "to set the framework for defining and allocating resources to priority activities that will have the most impact in improving perception and consumption of the BBC".

With Dyke's accountants sniffing at their door, however, one of their so-called "quick wins" is no less than "to ensure that the whole M&C team is highly valued and respected as individuals".

TONY Benn was delighted to be invited to take part in a television interview with Quatar-based station, Al Jazeerah.

A frequent critic of soundbite TV, Benn was looking forward an in-depth interview where he would be able to expound his views on the Afghan war in more than the usual couple of minutes afforded by the BBC.

But even the Bennattollah was not prepared for the two-hour grilling to which he was subjected. When the weary former MP arose from his seat to leave, he was politely requested to stay and view the footage.

GOING LIVE

THE BBC's *Six O'Clock News* went live to Simon Montague on 13 December for the latest on the conviction of Gary Hart, the motorist who fell who fell asleep at the wheel and caused the Selby rail disaster. Very illuminating it was too.

Montague was at Heston services on the M4 – a safe 200 miles from Selby. "Do we know how many people go out in this condition?" asked Huw Edwards from the studio. "Well we don't really know," replied Montague before adding: "If you don't get enough sleep you'll be having a high speed impact – especially on the motorway."

AD NAUSEAM

IF THERE is one thing advertising doesn't need, it's another meaningless awards ceremony. So put your hands together for the inaugural Ad Nauseam awards, hereafter to be known as the "blunt pencils".

The agency of the year – at a canter – is HHCL. The one-time creative hotshop has managed to mislay the best part of £30m worth of high-profile business during 2001, including the AA (arguing couple who had a whole nation wanting a divorce), Egg (Egg "loves you so much"; the feeling wasn't mutual), St Ivel and ITV. All these accounts now reside elsewhere.

Recently even Tango, with whom HHCL made its name in the early 90s, has been delivering ultimatums. It all makes for a miserable year for poor old HHCL chairman Simon Burridge, who was hired in June after heading-up Richard Branson's failed lottery bid. The Beardie kiss of death strikes again…

In the same category an honorary mention must go to Bates, after an impressive late run in which it impressed the judges with the Woolworth's Christmas spots and that ad for Elton John's new album. Sources suggest Elton's 60 seconds may have had something to do with the Royal Mail, but there's little in the ad to give such rumours credence. Bates also came up trumps with the Deluxe Furniture Store account, which is to advertising what Wimbledon are to football: effective, but dreadful to watch.

The no-progress prize goes to Gap, who a year ago were producing simple, effective advertising that had the slippery 18-24 market wrapped. It's been a torrid 12 months for the MOR costumier, what with the continuing allegations of sweatshop labour and the irresistible rise of Uniqlo (who've already destroyed Gap in Japan by being the same, but cheaper).

In response Gap has roped in what marketeers call "aspirationals" like French beatniks Daft Punk and the ubiquitous Shaggy, who've all signed on the dotted line, done their 30-second schtick and thus exchanged their credibility for a beige roll-neck. Given that advertising Gap is the musical equivalent of a duet with Des O'Connor, both sides have come out of the joint venture looking rather desperate.

Prize for the most entertaining campaign is awarded jointly to BT and cable operator NTL. Between the two of them more than 20 complaints about separate ads have been upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority in the last 12 months. The entertaining part is that most of these complaints came from within the two companies themselves – just last week the ASA upheld a BT quibble against another suspicious NTL claim, though often as not it's the other way round.

It would appear the only people who are paying attention to either of their (regularly misleading) print ads are the snipers in the enemy marketing department. Perhaps if they took the trouble to double-check the accuracy of their claims, the ASA could devote more time to dealing with public complaints.

Which only leaves the lifetime non-achievement award, a special gong for perennial procrastination. Cast your minds back, if you will, to a 1997 election pledge to ban tobacco advertising. Or you may prefer to remember an identical election pledge made four years later. Both pledges remain unmet. "New" Labour has given so much to their friends in adland – a government increase in adspend of 23 percent last year, in contrast to a slump in almost every other sector – yet it remains strangely reluctant to take anything away.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Gene Vincent Van Gogh

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

MODEL STORE
I'D LIKE TO RETURN THIS GIFT THAT SOMEONE GAVE ME FOR CHRISTMAS.
CERTAINLY. WHAT IS IT?
A MINCE PIE
TOILETS THAT WAY!

DOING THE ROUNDS

What, no blame?

THE audit commission's finding that the number of deaths due to drug errors has increased five fold in the last 10 years is no surprise to those who work in the NHS. But the department of health's target to reduce these by 40 percent by 2005 seems optimistic. The NHS itself is now one of the leading causes of premature death and disease in this country, with 25,000 deaths and half a million injuries caused each year by preventable errors alone.

"New" Labour has decided that promoting a "no blame" culture will encourage staff to come forward and admit to cock-ups, enabling swift action to prevent recurrence. But most doctors and nurses still believe they'll be named and shamed if they own up to anything, as the experience of Andrew Hobart suggests.

Last year Mr Hobart, a newly appointed consultant in accident and emergency medicine at London's Newnham hospital, turned the wrong knob on an anaesthetic machine and delivered nitrous oxide to the lungs of a three year old girl, rather than oxygen. The girl, Najiyah Hussain, died.

The anaesthetic machine in question has long been banned from anaesthesia departments because such a fatal error is so easy to make under pressure, and has been made before. But instead of throwing these obsolete machines away, they get palmed off on casualty departments where no-one would ever need to use nitrous oxide anyway. It's courting disaster, and any doctor could have made that mistake.

An inquiry reached a similar conclusion, recognized Hobart's commitment and compassion and recommended he be allowed to return to work under supervision. So far, so good for the new no blame culture. However, the *Daily Mirror* has since reported Hobart to the General Medical Council, which is obliged to investigate further, and the crown prosecution service (CPS) is waiting in the wings to make everyone suffer a lot more.

Clearly Hobart's distress cannot compare to that of the Hussains, but if all the 25,000 doctors who make fatal cock ups each year are hung out to dry, the NHS will collapse. Far easier to return to the old ways: burn the notes, bury the X rays and keep schtum.

Nod Off and Die

FALLING asleep at the wheel kills more people than drink driving and is particularly common among patients with sleep apnoea. This condition occurs when the airway behind the tongue collapses during sleep and although sufferers wake before suffocation, their disturbed sleep makes them seven times more likely to crash the car. Fortunately, diagnosis and treatment is available at specialist NHS sleep centres.

Unfortunately the waiting lists are horrendously long. In Edinburgh alone you can wait up to four years for an appointment, although Labour has helpfully divided this up into four blocks of one year so it doesn't breach their waiting time target.

Nurse!

WHILE the rest of Scotland tries to recruit 500 nurses to manage the winter pressures, Lothian University hospitals trust is axing up to 41 senior nursing posts after announcing a £1.75m deficit on top of its previous £5.2m overspend. The trust has also been without a human resources director for a year, which has left many other nursing posts unfilled. As RCN officer Lynn Mason put it: "It's absolute madness. The trust can't recruit and retain enough nurses as it is, yet they're getting rid of critical posts they know are vital to the delivery of care."

M.D.

"I hate Boxing Day"

DOWN ON THE FARM

LOOKING round for a last way to kick farmers in the teeth before the end of the year in which they had already organised the biggest administrative shambles in British government history, ie the FMD fiasco, Margaret Beckett's officials came up with "Operation Big Brother".

This is their brilliant wheeze to insist that every farmer in the country must buy a computer to keep him in electronic touch with "Control" – ie the Department for the Elimination of Farming and Rural Affairs, enabling Control to dish out its latest orders to farmers on a daily basis and requiring the farmers to report back to Control everything they do on the farm.

This comes hard on the heels of Big Sister's earlier proposal, that all farms must in future be licensed by the ministry, so that any farmer who in any way offends the officials can have his licence to stay in business withdrawn. This also of course comes from the government which has been rushing through its "animal death bill", empowering "Deathra" officials to go on to any farm, to kill any animal they wish, including cats and dogs (but not goldfish), while making it a criminal offence for the farmer to question what they are up to.

Mrs Beckett's contempt for farmers was summed up in her lip-curling comment at a recent farm show in Cornwall: "Aren't events like this boring?" In other words, these horrible little people bore me so much I am going to do everything I can to control and regulate them out of existence. Certainly by this measure she is doing a grand job. How her performance is viewed by others, however, was highlighted when the Great Caravanner recently appeared in Brussels at a major international conference on foot-and-mouth organised by the Dutch government.

This was dominated by leading vets from various countries arguing that a catastrophe like that organised by Britain in 2001 must never happen again. There must be no more barbaric mass-slaughter. The only scientific, civilised way to deal with this virus is to vaccinate.

Bernado Cane, Argentina's chief vet, explained how his country has been successfully using vaccination for 30 years and that it is completely safe both for animals and consumers. F.H. Pluimers, Holland's chief vet, explained how it is now perfectly possible to distinguish between animals that have been vaccinated and those which have been diseased, and that the EU must put vaccination top of its agenda in dealing with any future epidemic.

Up to her feet then rose a strange dinosaur, Mrs Beckett, seemingly unable to grasp a single word of what all these experts were saying. Vaccination would be very difficult, she said, because consumers would not want to eat the meat from vaccinated animals (she is clearly unaware that every supermarket in the country offers meat from animals which have been vaccinated up to 20 times). We have no guarantee that vaccination is safe for the animals, intoned Beckett. There are no tests to distinguish between animals that have been vaccinated and those which have had the disease. She was, in short, a laughing stock and it was shameful to think that this sneering, antediluvian creature represented Britain to the rest of the world.

'Muckspreader'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Acts of God and Byers

THE demise of Railtrack, like last year's floods, is giving train operators a great excuse for delays as demonstrated by West Anglia Great Northern's newsletter to passengers this month explained the recent causes.

The first page listed "infrastructure failure" (Railtrack's fault), "flooding" (God's fault) and leaf-fall (God again). Only passengers who bothered to turn the page would have seen a small section headed "driver recruitment" (er, WAGN's fault).

WAGN admits delays are being caused by driver shortages but insists it has its "maximum complement of drivers". The final item in the bulletin told of "special services over the Christmas and new year period" – ie WAGN choosing not to run trains at times of big demand for leisure travel.

The newsletter's message was that the problems are outside the company's control. Five cases of infrastructure failure are shown in detail. Apparently Railtrack has identified a solution to regular flooding near Roydon which involves raising the track by several feet. "Unfortunately, with Railtrack currently in administration, the work cannot be scheduled," adds WAGN, spreading the blame to transport secretary Stephen Byers as well as to Railtrack and God.

WAGN seems to have forgotten how long it routinely took Railtrack plc to carry out remedial work before it went into meltdown. That's surprising, because WAGN services suffered badly last year after the Hatfield crash – caused by a defective rail which Railtrack plc hadn't got round to fixing after several months.

But WAGN's blather is in line with train operators' attempts to have the public believe Railtrack suddenly became inept when it went into administration. The train operators emphasised a 45 percent increase in delays attributable to Railtrack – without mentioning increased delays attributable to train operators. Apart from the perpetual desire to blame someone else for pisspoor train services, the operators may have another motive: some of them want to take over the tracks themselves.

Bringing trains and infrastructure under common management would have many practical benefits, but do we really want bus companies which have proved incapable of running trains or buses properly to now take on the heavy-engineering activity of maintaining tracks, signals and tunnels? Stagecoach thinks we do. It is urging Byers to hand it control of the tracks used by its South West Trains franchise. Stagecoach's campaign won't go away. The company has been provisionally awarded the SWT franchise for another 20 years because it offered more of the same while its rival offered some radical solutions which would cost more (*Eye* 1026). Now it is trying to pressurise Byers into a quick and ill-considered decision by exaggerating Railtrack's problems while in administration.

Andrew Haines, managing director of SWT, has been saying publicly that morale among Railtrack employees has collapsed and commuters face travel chaos. The evidence for his assertion is hard to fathom. The workers who maintain the infrastructure are not Railtrack employees and have not lost Railtrack shares. Morale was poor among Railtrack's signallers long before they lost their shares; many were paid less than cleaners (*Eye* 992) and all signallers had to implement Railtrack's daft policy for train regulation which put commercial factors ahead of logic, making their jobs more difficult.

Haines was so busy throwing stones in his glass house he forgot to mention the travel chaos SWT victims have suffered because low morale among SWT employees has triggered strikes over issues such as the colour of waistcoats. He also forgot to say that more strikes are in the offing at SWT and at Virgin Trains – half owned by Stagecoach.

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

NOTHING TO LEWES

AS the town of Lewes, devastated by the worst floods of the century, began to mop up in October last year, the then Lib Dem leader of East Sussex county council (ESCC) David Rogers said that extra money offered by the government to improve Britain's flood defences would "fall far short of what is really needed".

Underfunding of flood defences "lies at the heart of the problem", he said. "Many people have been made homeless, with businesses and many farmers struggling to get back on their feet. Towns like Lewes and Uckfield have been devastated... It will take many years to recover."

It will indeed — and thanks to the parsimony and political timidity of Cllr Rogers's own council, towns such as Lewes and Uckfield will remain at risk of further floods for years to come. Just weeks after the deluge ESCC reps on the Sussex local flood defence committee (LFDC) voted against meeting in full the levy requested of local authorities by the environment agency (EA) to pay for urgently needed defences.

That was under the Lib Dems. This year, with ESCC under Conservative control, they have done it again, ganging up with Labour-run Brighton and Hove to frustrate West Sussex, the third council on the LFDC, which had wanted the EA to get its money. The EA wanted an increase of 14 percent on last year's levy, but on 12 December the committee voted for an increase of 9 percent, leaving the EA £500,000 short and missing out on a further £1m which would have been triggered in payments from the government. The result is that work to raise and strengthen the banks of the River Ouse and on reservoirs to catch floodwater upstream of Lewes may not now start until 2005 — and that 800 at-risk properties in the town could soon be uninsurable.

East Sussex says it cannot afford the full levy. But it has only saved itself about £180,000, much of which would have been recoverable from the government next year anyway, out of a budget of £412m. Many residents want to know why the money cannot be found by increasing council tax. To have funded the shortfall on last year's levy would have cost the average band D household a swingeing £1.46. But such extravagance is more than councillors are prepared to countenance. As ESCC's current leader, "Preposterous" Peter Jones, says: "I believe people in East Sussex have already suffered enough without being hit again in the pocket." Meanwhile, Lewes residents keep a close eye on the weather.

● **COUNCIL officers in West Somerset are peeved at a report from auditors Deloitte & Touch which found that the district council had spent £420,000 attempting to implement the government's "best value" efficiency drive since 1999 – and had managed to save a grand total of, er, £120,000. The council's spokesman said much of the figure for expenditure consisted of existing staff salaries (one councillor asked "so what were the staff doing beforehand?"). Nearly half the money saved — £50,000 – was achieved by scrapping the delivery of free bin liners. Sometimes, though not always, by taxi.**

MISSING LINCS

SHORTLY before Christmas Lincolnshire's ruling Tories agreed that the county council's standards committee should include some members who do not actually belong to the Tory group. The existing five-strong committee has three Conservatives, but that wasn't enough for the Tories, who voted in the summer to kick off all opposition representatives entirely. No one, it appeared, could safeguard ethics in Lincolnshire better than Lincolnshire's Tories.

The U-turn, which will see an eight-strong committee with only three Tories on it start work next year, possibly has something to do with the fact that earlier this month Inspector Knacker revealed that he is preparing a report for the crown prosecution service (CPS) into "alleged serious criminal offences involving practices and procedures" at the council. At the centre of the investigation is council leader Jim Speechley's role in plans for a £26.5m realignment of the A1073 between Peterborough and Spalding. "Sunny" Jim took part in discussions about alternative routes for a bypass around his parish of Crowland without mentioning that he owns a 4.2 acre field next to the favoured route. Such a field, currently worth about £12,000 as agricultural land, would be worth up to £750,000 if re-designated for housing. Cllr Speechley denies that he stands to gain financially out of the new road, and says he therefore had no need to declare an interest.

Further light may be thrown on standards in Lincolnshire when auditor KPMG completes a public interest report on severance payments to former chief executive Jill Barrow and former education director Norman Riches *[sic]*.

New emergency number introduced

POLICE in Gloucestershire are to introduce a new number for non-emergency situations.

Stroud News & Journal

HERE'S TO YOU, MRS JOBINSON

THE independent Jefferies report on how former Doncaster Labour party chairman and local NUM bigwig David Murdoch ripped off sick and dying miners via the Yorkshire Compensation Recovery Service (*Eyes passim*) includes many nuggets illustrating how business is done in the Beacon of Sleaze.

Take, for example, the recruitment of one John Murdoch, son of Dave, as welfare rights officer with the council. Murdoch was put through an unusual ordeal for Donny's favourite sons, in that he had to submit himself to an interview by four council officers and complete a written exercise. He failed the written test, and the assessment of his qualifications by an officer was "wholly negative". Yet he was appointed after all, following a second interview. One of his referees was Labour Cllr Margaret Robinson, who recommended that he should get the job... "being the son of a very good friend of mine".

● *How the scam worked – see In the Back, 26, 27.*

Councillors Doo and Lally will present the petition to Broxtowe Borough Council on December 19

Nottingham Evening Post

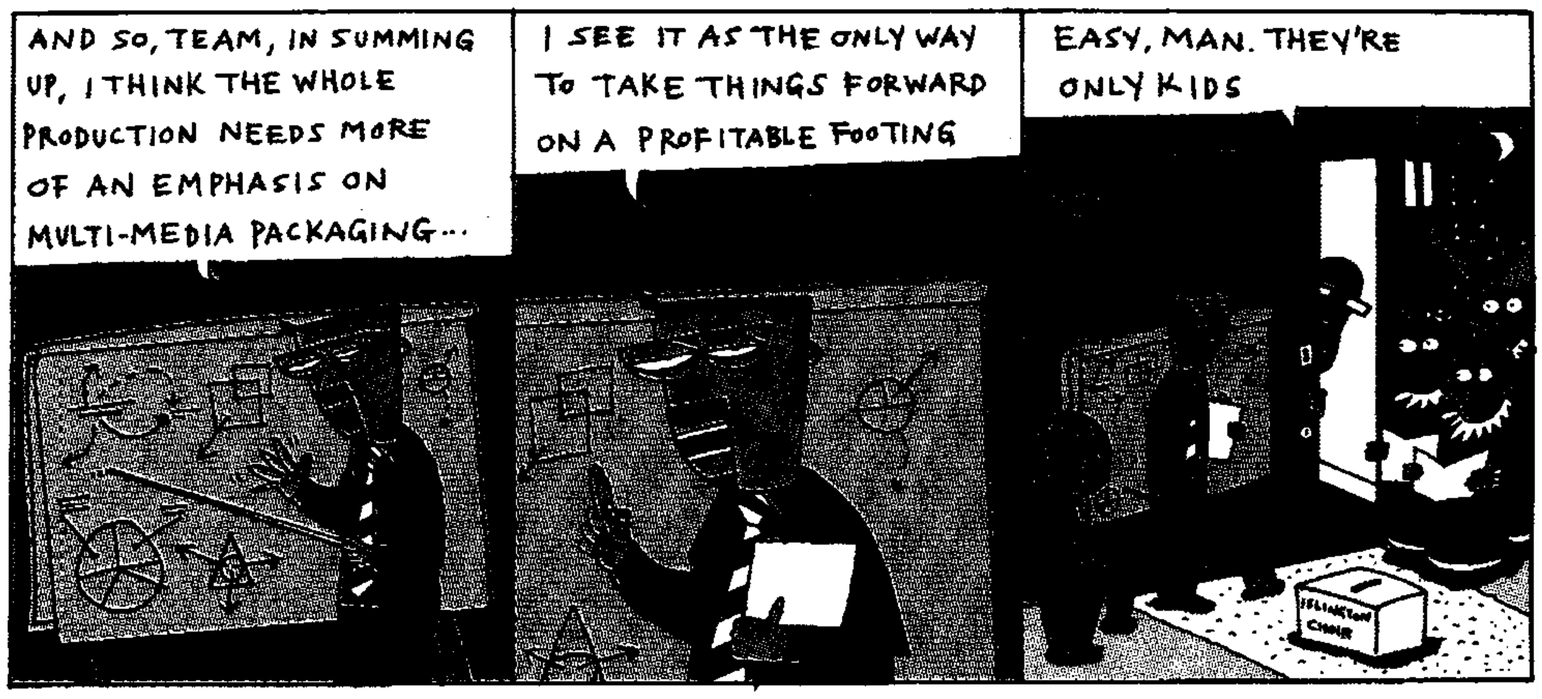
WIGHT KNIGHT

THE Isle of Wight peasantry are bemused by the antics of Lib Dem councillor and former fire chief John "Buckethead" Bowker, who spares no effort to remind all and sundry that he is a Knight of St Gregory.

He has even tried to insist that county hall menials address him as "Sir" and his wife Ann as "Lady". All but ye noble knight himself seem to know that this Roman Catholic handle, established by Pope Gregory XVI in 1831 and usually given to enthusiastic RC fundraisers, has no significance whatever outside the church. Unabashed, "Sir" John has spent some £3,000 on a coat of arms and sent Christmas cards dispensing benedictions from "Chevalier John and Lady Ann".

Meanwhile "Sir" John chairs a social services committee that has a projected deficit of more than £1.3m for the year. Care for the elderly is in chaos, with five residential homes due to close in the new year and the homeless list grows apace. No wonder the Vectis vassals are less than impressed.

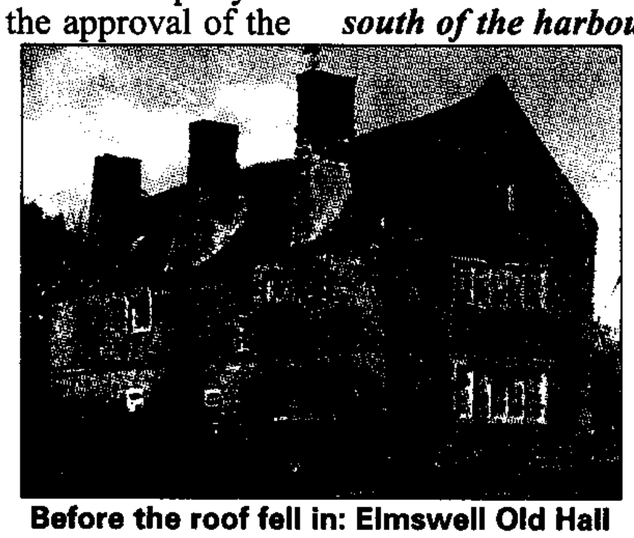
IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON – AT XMAS KNIFE & PACKER


AND SO, TEAM, IN SUMMING UP, I THINK THE WHOLE PRODUCTION NEEDS MORE OF AN EMPHASIS ON MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGING...
I SEE IT AS THE ONLY WAY TO TAKE THINGS FORWARD ON A PROFITABLE FOOTING
EASY, MAN. THEY'RE ONLY KIDS
ISLINGTON CHAIR
'JEZ AND PARENTS AT A PANTO
BEHIND YOU! LOOK BEHIND YOU!!
FOR GOODNESS SAKE, SON, I KNOW YOU'RE EXCITED BUT THE VILLAIN ISN'T EVEN ON STAGE
NOT THE VILLAIN! BEHIND YOU! LOOK, THERE'S AN EXQUISITE ART DECO LIGHT FITTING!

NOOKS and CORNERS

ELMSWELL Old Hall near Driffield in Yorkshire is a small gabled brick manor house of about 1635, built by Henry Best. His family sold the house in 1931. Since 1966 this charming and interesting building has been shamefully neglected and today, despite being listed grade II*, is roofless and derelict. The admirable Yorkshire Buildings Preservation Trust has been campaigning to save Elmswell Old Hall for years, but time is running out.

Having served two urgent works notices and a repairs notice without effect on the recalcitrant and complacent owner of Elmswell Old Hall, the retired Driffield magistrate and farmer, Graham Mackrill, East Riding of Yorkshire council at last took the bold decision to serve a compulsory purchase order last February. As is usual in such cases, local authorities being reluctant to attract financial liabilities, the CPO was accompanied by a "back to back" agreement with a third party to take on the building. So, with the approval of the Yorkshire Buildings Preservation Trust, Atlas Properties is prepared to reroof and restore the house and sell it for residential occupation. What could be simpler?



Before the roof fell in: Elmswell Old Hall

The trouble is that the council is so fearful of additional expense it requires the developer to put up a premium of its own money to insure against possible default and is also asking for a bond of almost £500,000. In other words, the council is not prepared to take any risk at all to save a listed building and is imposing unrealistic conditions on a potential saviour. Atlas Properties, which has worked with other local authorities on similar projects without such unreasonable demands being imposed, has now withdrawn. And East Riding of Yorkshire council declines to meet the York Buildings Preservation Trust to try to sort things out.

In *Eye* 1043 I described the architectural ambitions of Darryl Stephenson, chief executive of the East Riding of Yorkshire council, and their impact on the historic town of Beverley. In a recent letter to his council's northern conservation advisory committee, Mr Stephenson wrote: "I really do concur with the view that the continued obstruction of attempts to save the Grade II star listed building is nothing short of a national disgrace." Indeed it is, but it is now the East Riding council which seems to be ensuring these attempts will fail. Why?

The explanation seems to be that the council is "hung" politically and that policies fail which lack the support of one of the three main parties. And Mr Mackrill, the owner of longsuffering Elmswell Old Hall, is a good huntin' 'n' shootin' Tory and a friend of the former MP for Beverley, John Townend (Con).

A report this year by the local government improvement programme, while full of praise, noted that this council is "officer led", so it seems strange that dynamic Darryl, the chief executive, is not prepared to do something about what he rightly calls "a national disgrace".

ANOTHER victim of East Riding of Yorkshire's architectural policies is Bridlington. With its Medieval Priory church and charming Old Town, Bridlington is rather special and much of its charm comes from the fact that it is an old port with a harbour.

Unfortunately the council thinks Bridlington needs regenerating and, inactive and miserly as it is over Elmwell Old Hall, it is all too active and spendthrift by the North Sea. This fishing port is to be transformed into the "Yorkshire Marina" as the council run by Darryl — a keen sailor, as it happens — proposes to spend some £60m on a 500-berth marina immediately to the south of the harbour and then, not content with that, to fill in 36.5 acres of innocent beach to create a site for 350 housing units, a 100-bed hotel and, of course, shops and offices.

These fantastic proposals are the subject of a public inquiry now adjourned until next year. There is a statutory objector, the Harbour Commissioners, who find they are to be abolished and replaced by the council's "Harbour and Marina Board". The other main objector is the Bridlington Protection Group. What is curious is that English Heritage is not an objector, for the harbour was listed a year ago. As well it might be: Bridlington Harbour is medieval in origin and was once the only port of refuge between the Firth of Forth and the Thames.

Its present north and south piers date from the first half of the 19th century: both are to be partly or completely built over in the current "regeneration" proposals. Yet not only does EH's local representative, Jane Jackson, decline to appear at the inquiry, but she advised the council on its planning application to secure listed building consent to wreck Bridlington.

Government guidance on coastal planning suggests that with reference to marinas "any associated development should be assessed separately, on its own merits, taking into account whether it requires a coastal location." In other words, if it can be built elsewhere, it should be. And there seems to be no good reason not to place any marina in the existing harbour. That local government improvement report suggested that it is "timely for the council to pause for thought and listen more to others". If only it would.

'Piloti'

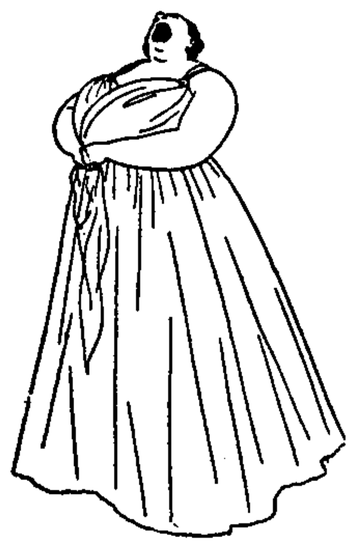
YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

I-SPY *Delaware*

Submitted by Bob Jones. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS



TV VIEWERS might have wondered what happened to the promised spot of seasonal opera on Christmas Eve.

The BBC had planned to show a brand new film of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, a sentimental Christmas weepy written for television in 1951. As the film was designed to go out on the 50th anniversary of the original transmission, as well as celebrating the 90th birthday of its composer, no expense was spared on making it.

The director was the internationally prominent Francesca Zambello; singers included star names like Robert Tear; and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales was conducted by Richard Hickox. The only problem was that no one in the BBC remembered to approach Menotti's American publisher, Schirmer, to acquire the rights. And when – only a couple of weeks ago, after the filming was done – the Beeb finally got round to it, the publisher said too bad: we're in the process of negotiating an exclusive rights deal with someone else so you can't show it.

For the past week BBC executives have been desperately trying to persuade the publishers to change their mind and allow a broadcast later in January, but so far there's been no response. No wonder TV licence fees look set to be increased.

STOCK market-listed Sanctuary Group, the music company which manages heavy rockers Iron Maiden, has brought the classical recording industry to a new low.

In 1999 Sanctuary acquired ASV, a minor classical label which has developed a novel way of paying artists. Instead of receiving royalties, performers who have spent thousands of pounds on making recordings are simply given a few hundred of their own CDs in return for all rights to the master copy. Although artists can sell the CDs on at a profit, each one is worth only about 75p to Sanctuary/ASV, making the company's initial outlay very small indeed.

In October Sanctuary also acquired classical and jazz label Black Box Music, whose founder and artistic principal Chris Craker is said to be working very closely with ASV's managing director, Richard Harrison. Whether Black Box will soon be forcing musicians into a similar corner – hand over your rights for a couple of hundred quid – remains to be seen. At least Sanctuary's music consultant Jonathan King is no longer around to put in his four penn'orth.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Private Eye

Rip-off wristwatch

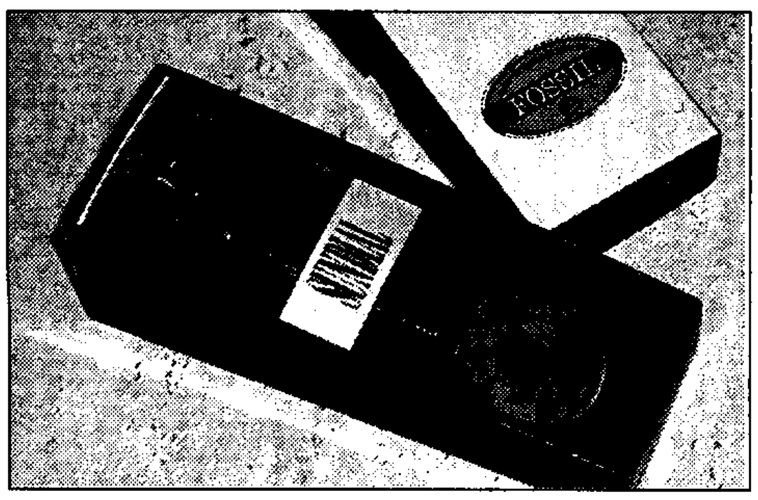
Sir,

Never would I have believed that the usually reliable Gnome's Xmas Mail Mart would be a part of Rip-Off Britain. The very first item is the Elizabethan Sundial Wristwatch for a queenly £79.99 and yet, as the attached photo shows, Fossil marketed the same product a few years ago in the USA for a more proletarian US $20.

As my subscription is only one issue old, it's far too early to cancel.

Yours faithfully,
KEN KESSLER,

Canterbury.



Hedge fun

Sir,

I was disappointed that Gnome's Xmas Mail Mart had nothing for plant lovers this year. Would you be so good as to suggest to his Lordship that he cultivate Bonsai Leylandii for next December?

If these hedgelets were planted in narrow troughs, I think they could be a great hit with office cubicle-dwellers seeking greater privacy or shade from over-generous supply of fluorescent lighting.

PAUL BURNS,
Wembley, Middx.

Bath tub thumping

Sir,

I was amused to see the "Autobath" among Gnome's collection of unlikely "Xmas Mail Mart" offerings. In fact just such a system has been a standard feature of modern Japanese bathrooms for some years: I can draw a bath with a single push of one button in my kitchen, and yes, I can program in the desired water depth and temperature. These systems are generally provided free of charge by the gas suppliers.

Yours about to enjoy a nice long soak,
TIM SOPER,

Japan

Miller's crossing

Sir,

I read with interest the MMR replies in your last issue from the usual suspects. Elliman and Bedford reiterate the point that they believe "the final decision rests with the parents". This is of course nonsense. If they truly believed that the final decision should be left to the parents they would support giving the parents a choice other than the current ludicrous MMR or no vaccination. Their own response was of course selective. While the South African study may have concluded that the MMR vaccines were faulty, it does not take away from the fact that the single vaccines were extremely effective.

No doubt Miller will be pleased that her and her employers constant jibes aimed at Dr Wakefield have led to his resignation. Before they break open the champagne perhaps they will stop to think of the thousands of vaccine-damaged children who have been left on the scrap heap, now even more so by the Royal Free's scandalous treatment of a caring and dedicated expert in the field of autism.

STEVE LAW, Father,
Campaigner for Autism Resources and Vaccine Choice, www.singlevaccines.com

O·B·N

— OF THE YEAR —

Former US President Bill Clinton may not be the most powerful man in the world any more but he still has star-status pulling power. I was lucky enough to be among the 500-strong audience when he delivered the BBC's annual Richard Dimbley lecture in London...

...we were all happy to turn out to a dingy university lecture hall for the evening in the hope of rubbing shoulders with the former president. It is true what they say about genuine stars: it's not how they look, what they do or how they speak, it's that they alter the molecules in the room when they walk in.

JULIA HARTLEY BREWER
Sunday Express

Nominated by J. James.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Heads and tales

Sir,

Your otherwise flawless organ was compromised by weak facts in Eye 1042. I was one of the 600 new Heads at the Conference organised by the National College for School Leadership in November. It was held in the gloomy grandeur of the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in Westminster as the NCSL itself is barely more than a heap of good intentions on a building site in Nottingham.

After a morning of speeches by the leaders of leaders – Heather du Quesnay (never a headteacher) and Richard Greenhalgh (never been in a school) Paul Corrigan was at least funny. Had I known his provenance I might have joined the many who left after lunch. That, at least, had plenty of fresh fruit – I expect this will help us work until we're 85.

Heads are effectively led by heads, as SHA and NAHT show. Sandhurst may have much to teach us, but our leadership will be bloody useless if we don't have any staff. Recruitment and retention are the only issues for us, and these were pretty well avoided on the day.

Still, I got a free night in a posh hotel and a bag to carry paper about in from NCSL. What I didn't get was a clearer view of what it's ***for****.*

CAROLYN ROBERTS,
Durham.

Brown nose?

Sir,

May I through your columns express my thanks for E.J. Thribb's most thoughtful appreciation of the life of my late mother, Rosemary Brown (Eye 1042)?

In her lifetime, she always took a keen interest in your fine organ, and she would have been flattered to have been so honoured with a kind commemoration. A more immediate proof of life after death is indeed hard to imagine!

Yours sincerely,
THOMAS BROWN,

London SW5.

London and Paris

Sir,

You say that the choice by Jonathan Meades and Anita Brookner of Michel Houellebecq's Plateforme as their Book of the Year was "showing off" because it was published only in French and therefore not available in Waterstone's.

But when it was published there were Jamie Oliver style heaps of it in Grant and Cutler, about four minutes from the Eye's offices (though the smart punters save the scandalous third extra added on French books by British bookshops by going straight to FNAC's website) and it was easily the most high profile novel of the season in France.

It's not much good complaining that the literati are not interested in work "published beyond the citadels of literary London" if you rubbish anyone who tries something that is exactly that. France is not that far away and Houellebecq's is an easy enough prose for people with a reasonable bit of French (even this Scouse yobbo) to read. Give your readers a bit of credit.

Yours etc,
NICHOLAS MURRAY,

Presteigne, Powys.

Brian blessed

Sir,

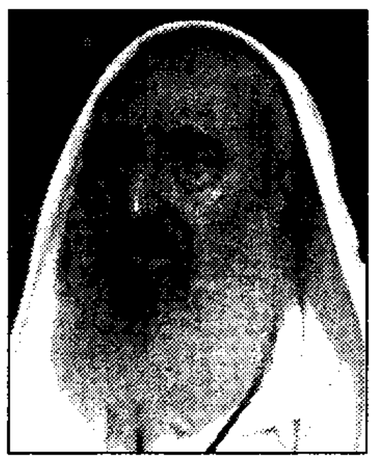
You missed a very moving tribute to the late George Harrison in your Christmas edition. During his Good Morning Sunday programme, Don McLean said (after playing "My Sweet Lord"), "Thanks George, I'm sure God has forgiven you for producing The Life of Brian."

Fortunately, you don't need me to take the piss out of Mr McLean. God has done that already.

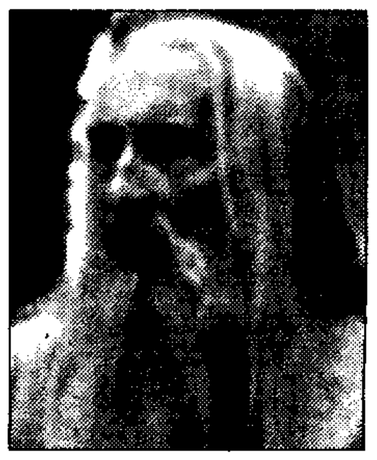
STAN BROADWELL,

Bristol.

Lookalike



Lee



Sheikh Ahmed

Sir,

I wonder if by chance anyone has noticed the similarity between Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the guru of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, and Christopher Lee in the publicity stills for the Lord of the Rings?

Having already played Jinnah and Fu Manchu, can it only be a matter of time before the great Hammer ham plays the Palestinian fundamentalists' spiritual leader?

JAMES GAVIN,

Via e-mail.

"You've got to stop buying people's affection"

Credit due

Sir,

"Learning the hard way" attributed the government's suspension of the individual learning account programme to the broadcast of a File on Four programme about ILAs a few days before. In fact, in both the House of Commons debate on ILAs and the House of Commons education select committee, it was acknowledged that it was the News of the World that not only first raised the issue of widespread fraud (back in May) but then doggedly pursued the matter with the DfES, running piece after piece in the Cash and Parry column, until the ILA scheme was suspended (although not before it had cost the taxpayer in excess of £500m).

VIVIENNE PARRY,

Cash & Parry, News of the World.

LUVVIES

"We went somewhere private, and we cried together. It was totally surreal. We sensed a lot of pain in each other. We didn't even really talk. We wrote weird poetry and held each other's hands. It's very weird when your ability to make art from your pain is what brings you fame."

COURTNEY LOVE describing a few hours with Russell Crowe
Bath Chronicle

"You've got to have the skin of a rhino and the soul of a baby to be a film actor."

DENIS LAWSON
Equity Journal

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Utter Pilge?

Sir,

I write with reference to your parody of John Pilger in Eye 1042. I've always loved your organ, and will continue to digest it, however sometimes you do go just a little bit wide of the mark. I'm not writing in order to defend Mr Pilger, he is perfectly capable of doing that for himself, but nevertheless the implication of the parody was just a little bit too hard to swallow.

Are you suggesting, by implication, that BushBlair was right to decimate a sovereign nation in order to find a couple of men? Had BushBlair shown any ounce of competence in running their own respective nations, then maybe, just maybe, there might have been some positive argument for these actions.

Quite rightly Mr Pilger has consistently argued that (in broad terms) the BushBlair-shoulder-to-shoulder-partnership had no moral right to decimate Afghanistan the way it did. It is perfectly true to say that some of Mr Pilger's detailed arguments may not be correct, but his overall point is valid and honest. Furthermore the validity and honesty of his fundamental arguments have shone like a beacon among the utter claptrap churned out by most toadying hacks.

Yours faithfully,
VERONICA CHAPMAN (former advisor to my own children 1971-1989),

Via e-mail.

PS: Compliments for your 'Letter from Israel' in the same edition. That's more like it!

Ariel bombardment

Sir,

I am a Jew who is disgusted with Israel persistently dragging the good name of my community through the blood of the Palestinians. With the US firmly on their side and Rev Blair firmly on the USA's side all that is left to oppose the Zionist movement and the State of Israel is the media. Unfortunately, on foreign policy, we have a ridiculously compliant media. So I always look forward to reading The Book of Sharon and the occasional letter from Israel in the Eye.

Yours faithfully,
MARK ELF,

Dagenham, Essex.

London Bridge is falling down

Sir,

Re: The shite display monitors at Waterloo: exactly the same has happened at London Bridge. They have yet to rip out the old-style display board, though – they merely seem to have lost the ability to make it work. If there is ever a special announcement, several trains are not shown on the monitors, as the special announcement appears repeated across five or so monitors, overriding whatever timetables they were previously showing. Because the monitors require close scrutiny, commuters are forced to stand in a tight cluster around the screens where previously they could roam the concourse and still be able to see the timetable board. As they are also more tightly packed than ever on the trains (many services around south London have been cancelled in the past two months due to driver shortages), and the new (but non-functional) automatic ticket gates force them into a bottleneck going on and off the platform for no discernible reason, the atmosphere in the station at peak times is not at its sunniest these days.

LUDLOW SPINKS,

Via e-mail.

The Eagle has crash-landed

Sir,

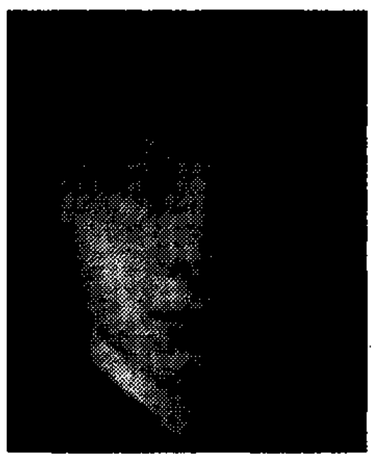
If David Regan's idea of getting out more (Eye 1042) is a visit to Derby's Eagle Centre, then I feel deep compassion for him. It is/was just such another closed-in plastic shopping complex that is/was* to be dumped on the River Gardens here, as part of the new bus-station scheme.*

SYLVIA RILEY,

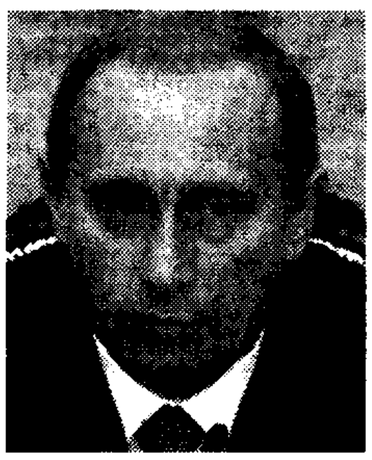
Derby.

● *Tense uncertain as developers may now be pulling out.*

Lookalike



Putin



Arnolfini

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the extraordinary similarity between President Putin of Russia and the bridegroom Signor Giovanni Arnolfini in the painting by Jan Van Eyck? Are they by any chance related?

ENA B. SEWELL,

Via Ena-mail.

They will be sentenced after the trial of a 16-year-old girl who is accused of being involved.
She denies robbery and possessing an imitation forearm.

Cambrian News

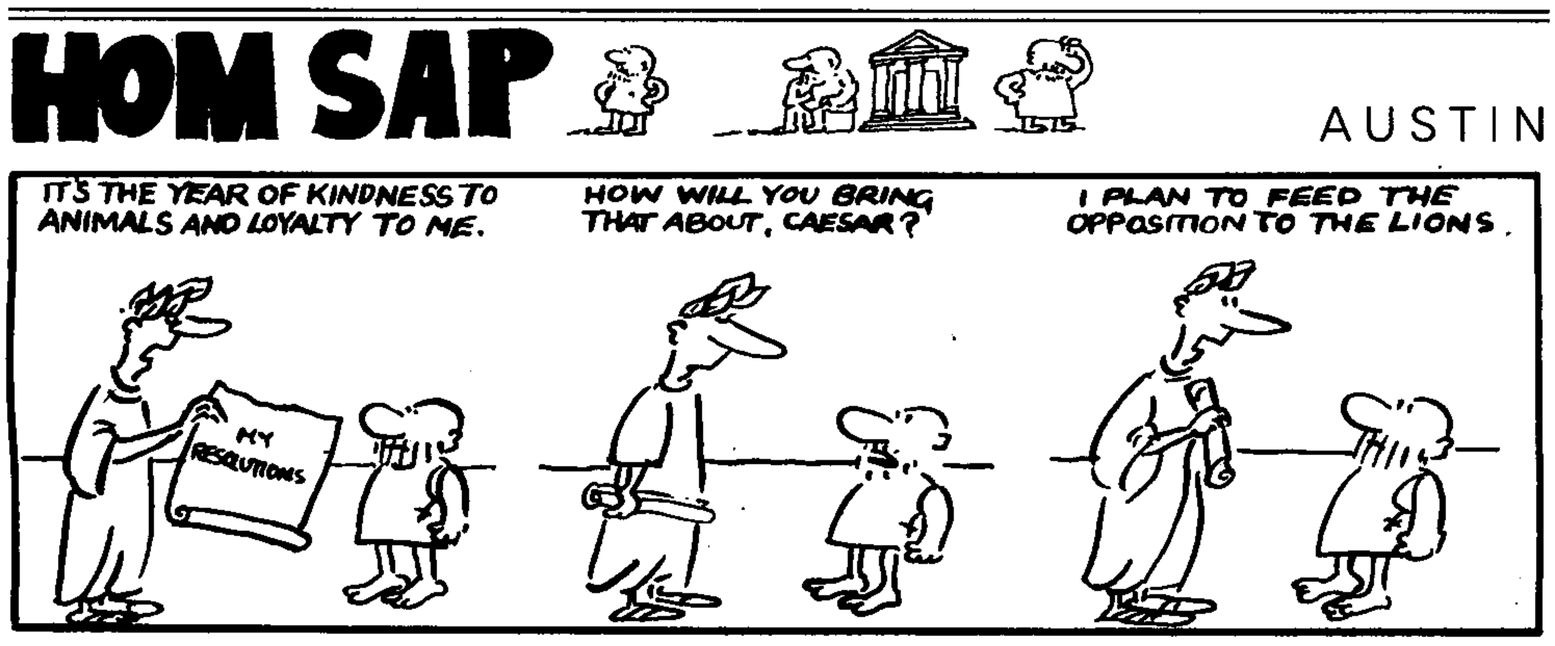
The Arse Council

Sir,

While Lunchtime O'Boulez has perked up wonderfully in recent issues, your arts gossip under Media News still fails often to hit its target. Arts Council chairman Gerry Robinson (Eye 1043) has merely taken notice of artists and companies who've griped about the incompetence of the 10 independent expenses-and-consultant-guzzling regional arts boards (RABs). Most clients want to return to the time when the Arts Council directly ran regional offices; Robinson has told his senior management to arrange this. Unfortunately his chief executive Peter Hewitt is a former RAB chief who hasn't the heart or nous to sort it out. Instead he's done what he'd do at his old RAB and hired consultants who've delayed the transfers and muddled the issues (which does no harm to their fees). The unfavourable trades union survey you refer to was actually directed at senior management. Therefore it's not Robinson who should go but the clueless Hewitt.

Happy New Year,
RICHARD WITTS,

Brighton.


HOM SAP
AUSTIN
IT'S THE YEAR OF KINDNESS TO ANIMALS AND LOYALTY TO ME.
MY RESOLUTIONS
HOW WILL YOU BRING THAT ABOUT, CAESAR?
I PLAN TO FEED THE OPPOSITION TO THE LIONS.

Santa Claus called on
December 24th
but unfortunately, you were out.

For us... and against us...

Sir,

Dubya and Christ are not the only people to have come up with the phrase "Those who are not with us are against us" (Eye 1041). In The Twelve Caesars Suetonius writes of Julius Caesar that "Nobody can deny that during the Civil War, and after, he behaved with wonderful restraint and clemency. Whereas Pompey declared that all who were not actively with the government where against it and would be treated as public enemies, Caesar announced that all who were not actively against him were for him." I'm shocked and surprised that you classically educated toffs at Private Eye didn't pick up on this. By the way, Pompey the Great lost the war.

Yours faithfully,
KIERON McNULTY,

London SE20.

Sir,

In Street of Shame (1041) you rightly point out that President Bush did not coin the "Those that aren't with us are against us." But I would suggest that his speechwriter borrowed the phrase from the Bolsheviks, whose cheery slogan "kto ne s nami, tot protiv nas," or "Who is not with us is against us," inspired many bloody shenanigans.

Sorry to be a pedantic twit, but you started it...

Yours,
EDWARD BAUMGARTNER,

London W12.

Happy as Larry?

Sir,

I have spent some time thinking of an appropriate way to honour the memory of my father in a way which reflects his life. I have decided I would like to establish a music scholarship in his name. I hope that the many people who knew him, both personally and through his music, will feel that this is a fitting way of remembering him and ensuring that his name lives on, helping young musicians of the future to reach the top of their profession.

My father ran away from home to play the mouth organ at the age of 14. He did not have any academic or musical education after that point and always regretted it. I think this is a project he would have been proud of.

If you would like to pay tribute to my father in this way, please send a cheque to start up the scholarship fund, making it payable to: Royal Academy of Music, and send it c/o Fiona Newton, Development Director, The Larry Adler Scholarship Appeal, Royal Academy of Music, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5HT. The Royal Academy of Music is a registered charity, number 310007.

MARMOSET KATELYN ADLER.

I'm Number One...

Sir,

I enjoyed your cartoon but, as you can see, my ACTUAL prison number is 8782 – exactly 500 after SHAMED PEER Lord Archer, who is 8282. FAMED QUEER JK, perhaps?

I also liked your analysis of the News of the World "trawl" story – did you notice they failed to include the NATIONAL TABLOID EDITOR, the OLD BAILEY JUDGE and the SENIOR POLICE OFFICER? I think we should be told!

The Eye is big in the nick.

Happy Christmas,
JONATHAN KING,

HMP Belmarsh.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"This ground is surprising – it holds about 60,000 but when there are around 30,000 in you get the feeling that it is half empty."
RAVI SHASTRI, Sky Sports
(Andy Cooper)

"... and Tottenham ice their sublime cake with the ridiculous."
PETER DRURY, ITV
(Dominic Birch)

"Well, you can only fire at an open goal when you discover that it is a hand grenade you are kicking rather than the ball."
DAVID BLUNKETT, Hansard
(Adam Mellows-Facer)

"It's hard to know where to draw the line."
MARTIN CREED, Turner Prize winner
(Edward Lewisohn)

"It's a tough month for Liverpool over the next five or six weeks."
ALAN GREEN, Radio 5 Live
(Simon Tracy)

Letter from **Burma**
from Our Own Correspondent

NOTHING is unusual in Burma. We have long since given upon expecting the generals who run our country as if it were their birthright to do anything logical. Indeed, there was a time when our currency, the kyat, was only available in denominations divisible by nine, a number regarded as auspicious by General Ne Win, our then military ruler. And money is again at the centre of our latest scam.

In a country where the media are 100 percent state-controlled and 100 percent dull, rumours are a way of life. Recent talk that our biggest banknotes were about to be withdrawn from circulation prompted panicky efforts to offload grubby 500 and 1,000 kyat notes by those who remembered the last time the army wiped out our savings overnight by suddenly declaring certain notes no longer to be legal tender. That attempt at licensed banditry, dressed up as an assault on a thriving black market, succeeded in plunging Burma into a political and economic crisis that cost the general his job and from which we have yet to recover.

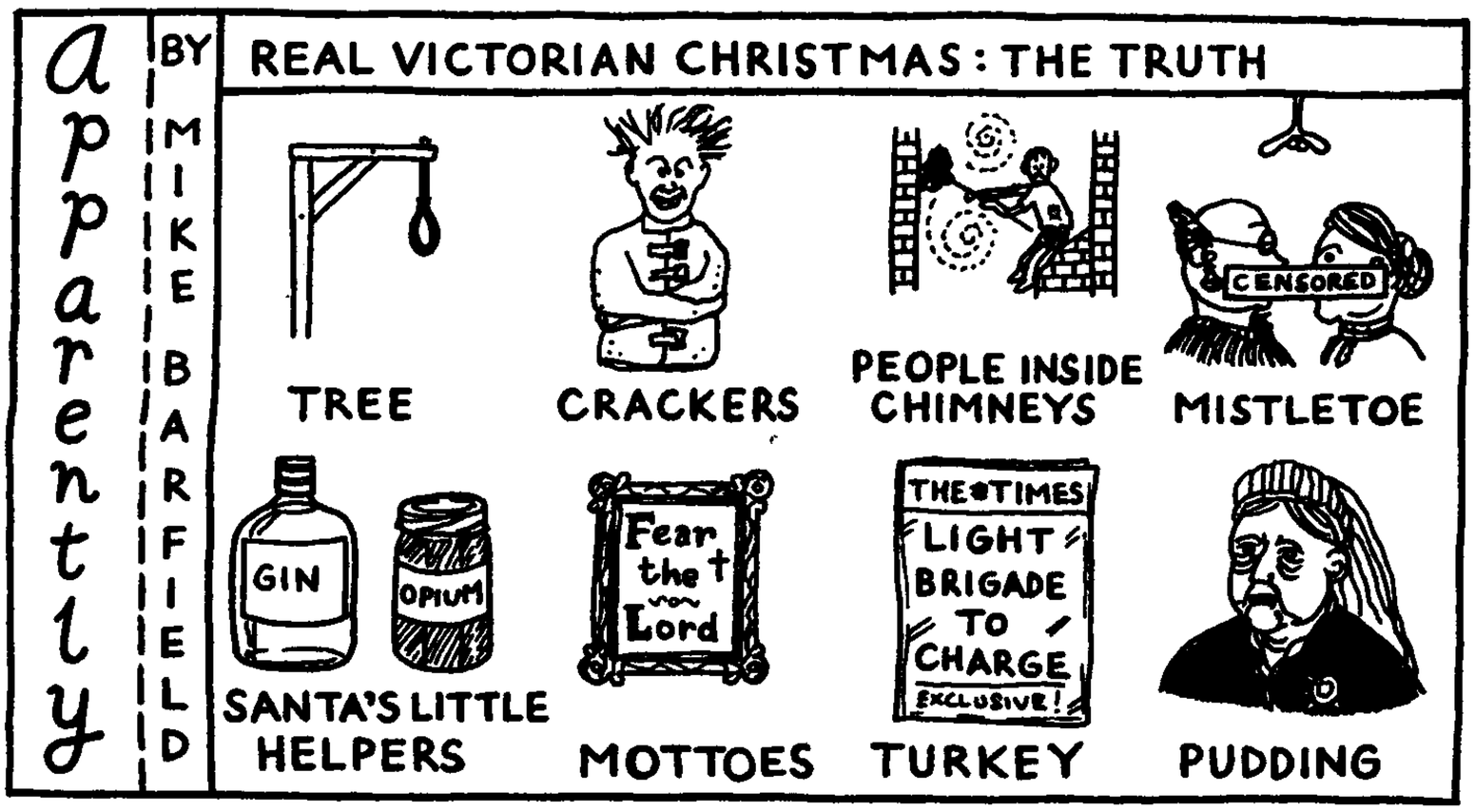
Our current crop of military men are now fuelling speculation because they are so short of dollars. Sometime ago they tried to control the black market by giving two dozen currency traders licences. If they don't do as the generals want these are revoked – or, worse, they're stuck in jail. But this hasn't stopped the black market exchange rate from plummeting to 800 Kyat to the dollar. The official rate, just six kyat to the dollar, is used only by a dwindling band of tourists who must exchange $200 when the first enter the country.

We are so desperate for foreign currency to pay for the military's new toys, the 10 Russian MiG jetfighters they bought earlier this year. Inflation is spiralling, in some sectors absurdly so. Even the most tired family saloon can now fetch $10,000 – twice what it cost three months ago. As a result we can now count among our few growth industries car theft. Gangs of thieves steal old bangers in neighbouring Thailand and make millions when they are smuggled across the border.

But while an already miserable life under poverty and dictatorship has been getting steadily worse for most us, new hotels and buildings are sprouting up everywhere and cars choke the streets. Someone at least is making money. It's not very difficult to see who. It's the generals and their families. Anyone who wants to do business must deal with them. Their tentacles spread everywhere. If you want to get an import licence or start a new business you must first pay off the military. The Rangoon mayor General Kyaw Ba is notorious and known as Mr Ten Percent. But foreign businessmen say they prefer to deal with him because at least the kick-back is standard whereas with other generals it could be even more.

It's a kind of corruption that goes from top to bottom, with policemen and soldiers at the bottom of the heap now demanding double their usual "tea money" to help cope with the spiralling cost of living. Among the biggest winners are the regional commanders who control the flow of cross-border trade – from foodstuffs and cars to drugs. There is no real industry to talk of in Burma and even food output is declining.

Not that our farmers are idle. Far from it. Indeed, it is thanks to their ceaseless efforts to increase opium production that our otherwise moribund economy remains afloat. And here, at least, is some good news. The unfortunate events in Afghanistan of late have hit our main rivals in the heroin trade hard, and we expect to fill much of the demand they seem set now to struggle to service.



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

The Vicar's New Year Message

A Happy New Year to you all, no matter which faith or creed to which you subscribe. As my old friend Reverend Jefferson Clinstone of the Seventh Day Fornicators put it so well in his Advent address at St Dimbleby's, "We're all of us brothers and sisters, imprisoned in our little boxes, whether we be Protestant or Catholic, Muslim or Jew, black or white, gay or straight, male or female, Liverpool Town or Arsenal United. And my message to all you good folk in Britain-land is that we've got to get out of those little boxes and get into the one great big box that's called Love." What a moving moment that was, and I know there weren't many dry eyes in that congregation at St Dimbleby's, when we joined together in that great hymn of St John of Lennon, "All you need is love."

So that's the message of this year that is now coming to an end.

It may have seemed like a year of tragedy, violence, terrorism and war. But, hey, isn't that what love is really all about? It's what the New Labour Bible calls "tough love".

And I've even written a chorus which you'll find on my website. It's a tune I've used before, but I've changed the lyrics slightly to bring it more in tune with the whole new post-September 11 mood.

"We're going to be tough, tough, tough on love,
Tough on the causes of love."
(repeat)

Doesn't that say everything about this incredible year? I know there were a lot of you in those dark days after September 11, who thought the world was about to come to an end.

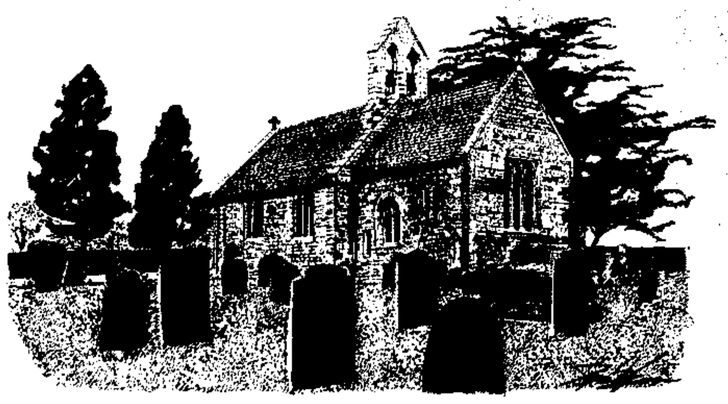
Well, all I can say to you now is, in the words of the good book, "O, ye of little faith." *(Letter to the Guardian, 7.3)*

It's a good thing that your vicar was not one of those doubting Thomases who just threw up their hands in despair and said "woe is me! There's nothing we can do. The end is nigh!"

A mere three months later it all looks very different, doesn't it? As my very good friend the Rev. Dubya Bush put it, "I come not to bring peace but to kick ass."

Wise words indeed from one of the great spiritual leaders of our time – and isn't "kicking ass" just another expression of "tough love" in action?

As it says in the Ten Commandments *(New World Order Edition)* "Though shalt kick thy neighbour's ass, and his wife's



and his children's and his children's children's" *(Book of Ariel)*.

And my vision of building a new world? I know in olden times it only took three days to rebuild the temple. But sorting out the whole world in three months isn't bad! I think even our friend at the Tesco Leftover Winter Festival Puddings counter would have to agree!

So as we look forward to another year, I think we can all be modestly proud of what I have achieved!

So raise your glasses, one and all, link arms, and drink a toast with me and Cherie (and of course Euan!) to "Auld Lairg's Pisst".

Yours, Tony

From The Vicar's Wife:

To whom it may concern:

In recent weeks, my client (myself), a highly important lawyer specialising in human rights, has been approached by a number of media personnel demanding to know whether Baby Leo has been or is about to be given the MMR vaccine. This is a *prima facie* contravention of Article 36(b) of the Human Rights Act, constituting a breach of privacy. Any further harassment of my client (me) will result in prosecution, followed by a lengthy custodial sentence. My client is thinking particularly here of her half-sister Miss Lauren van der Booze, who will face additional charges of treason when indicted under the act.

Cherie Booze
C/o Matrix Chambers
The High Street

Millennium Tent Update

Tremendous news to kick off the New Year! The much derided (not by me!) Millennium Tent has finally found a buyer. Messrs. Sharkey and Hutch from America, a highly respected leisure investment company, who have seen its potential as an indoor sports arena for ping pong, badminton and the like have agreed to take the Tent off our hands for the grand sum of £0.00. They have also generously agreed to build an office block on top of the church car park. So thanks to them and well done everyone!
T.B

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

As Moderator of the United Liberal Democratic Reformed Church, I was delighted to welcome into our flock Mr Paul Marsden, a convert from your own congregation. I am only surprised that it took our new recruit so long, given the levels of intolerance, bigotry and intimidation which have now sadly become only too typical of your

Yours non-ecumenically
Rev. C. Kennedy,
536a Ashdown House,
David Steel Close

The Editor-in-Chief reserves the right to cut all letters accusing the vicar of intolerance. This is something I will not tolerate. A.C.

BLAIRY CHRISTMAS! Santa brings the children some wonderful presents – but the best gift of all is a visit from the vicar and his wife!

Senior Men's Fellowship Circle

Mr Blunkett, the head of our Neighbourhood Watch, gave a most interesting talk on The Rights and Duties of the Citizen. He said there were too many "airy-fairy views" about liberty, freedom of speech and so forth. What was needed in society today was a bit of "old-fashioned discipline", especially so far as foreigners are concerned. "If people want to make their homes here," he said, "they should learn our ways." There was laughter when Mr Blunkett said that "there is no point putting up notices telling people what they can and can't do, if they can't read English".

Things turned ugly at question time, when an old gentleman in the audience asked a question about *habeas corpus*. Mr Blunkett replied that he wasn't going to stand there being insulted in fancy Latin by "toffee-nosed twits", who were only opposed to him because he went to a comprehensive. At this point Mr Blunkett stormed out, accompanied by his dog, Pierrepoint, knocking over the festive Diwali tree on the way. A.C.

The Daily Talibangraph
Friday, December 28, 2001

MYSTERY DEEPENS OVER WHEREABOUTS OF BIN DUNCAN

By Our Special Correspondent Al Campbell

London, Tuesday

IN THE depths of the Tory Bory complex there are the scattered remains of a handful of fanatical supporters – but the man himself is nowhere to be found.

There have been occasional sightings of the fanatical leader of a once powerful ruling sect but nothing concrete has been heard of him for months.

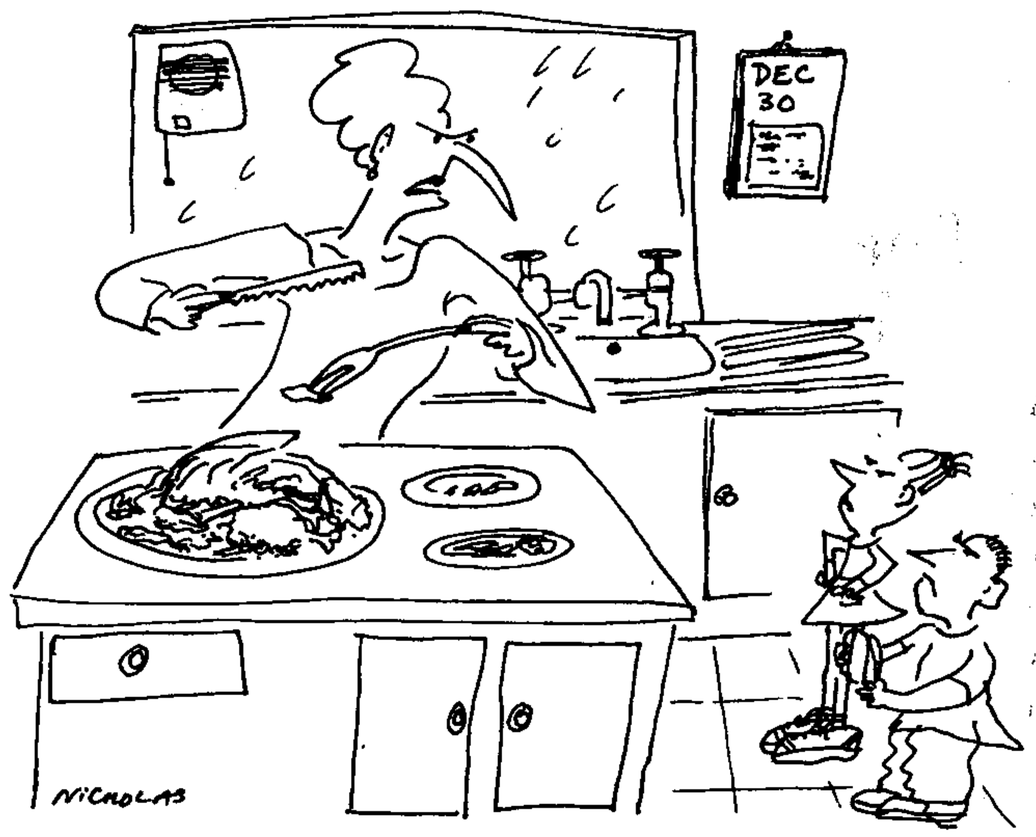
A video purporting to be of Bin Duncan addressing the House of Commons has been released but the sound is very bad and the content of Bin Duncan's speech is very hazy and out of focus.

Conspiracy theorists believe that the video is a fake and that the man purporting to be Bin Duncan is a body double – probably called Francis Wheen.

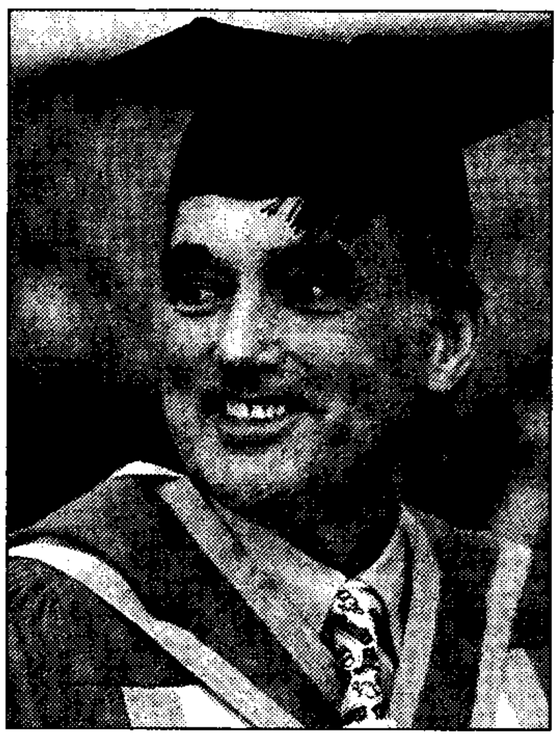
In his last recorded radio transcript on the respected Al-Steve-Wright-In-The-Afternoon-Show, Bin Duncan can be heard exhorting his troops, "to give in at all costs and admit that Tony Blair will defeat them."

Some people claim Bin Duncan is already dead in the water, others that he is in hiding deep in Smith Square. One thing is sure. No one knows or cares.

"What is it, dear... You and Michael don't seem as close"



"Look, kids – a turkey isn't just for Christmas"



That Honorary Degree Citation in Full

SALUTAMUS GEORGIUM BESTUM QUONDAM EXPERTO LUDUM BALLOS PEDICULOS PRO MANCUNIUM UNIFICATUM SUB LEGENDARIUS MATTHEUS BUSBEIUS ET ATQUE PRO HIBERNIA NORDICA DRIBULO WIZARDICUM CUM MAGICIS PEDIBUS NOTUS AD MULTOS SCRIBULIS SOCCERENSIS QUAM E.I. ADDIBUS PER EXEMPLO MOSTOS MAGNIFICISSIMUS LUDOR IN HISTORIAM MUNDI SED IN VERITAS, EHEU! BIBULOSISSIMUS, INEBRIATUS SEMPER ET PISSARTICUS MAXIMUS QUI FREQUENTAVIT DISCOS CLUBOS NOCTOSQUE CUM MULTIBUS BLONDIBUS PNEUMATICUS IN MINIMIS SKIRTIBUS SED IAM DIXIT "SUM TEETOTALITER SOBERISSIMUS." SED, EHEU, NEMO CREDIT UNUM VERBUM SALUTAMUS BOTTOMIS UPPIS ET CHEERIOSUS!

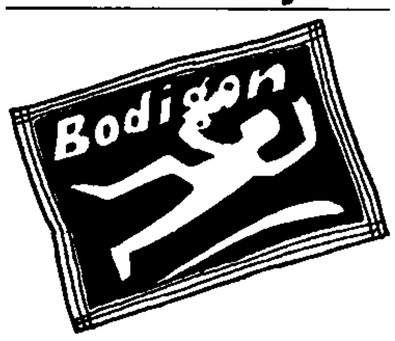
Degree issued by the Bell's Whisky Polytechnic (formerly Queens University, Belfast)

PRODUCT RECALL

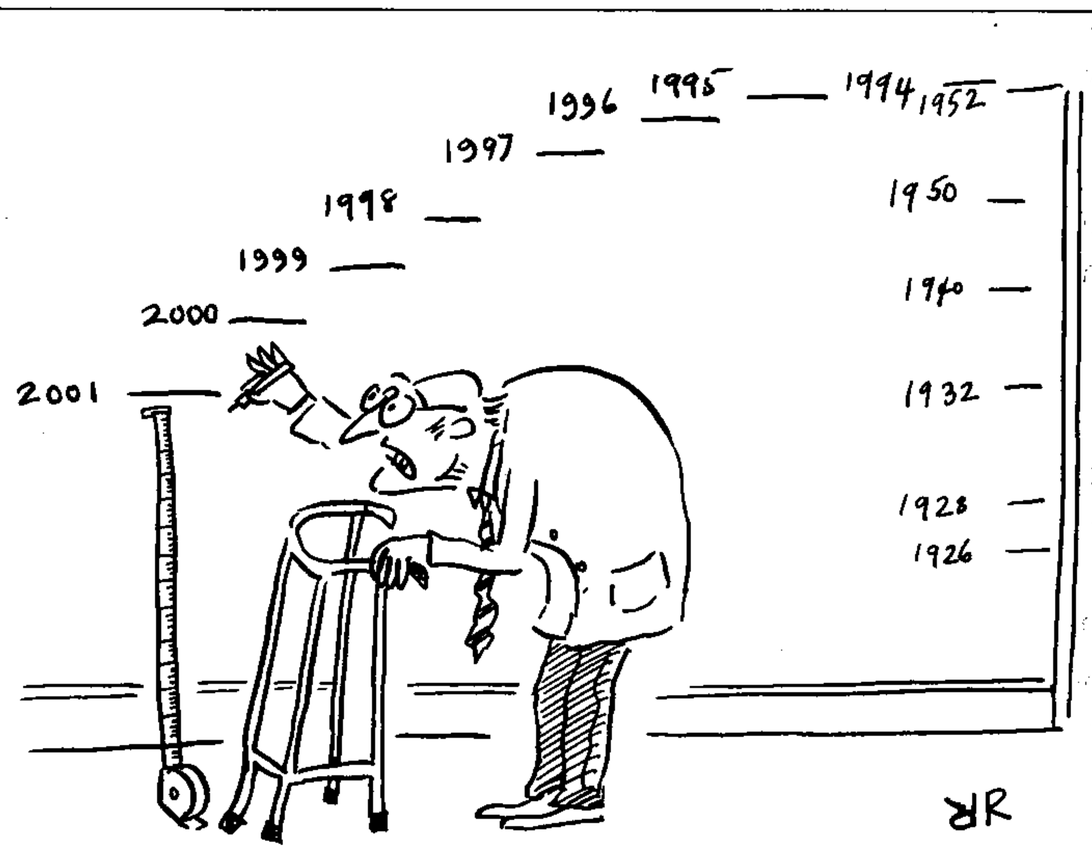
The following advert was placed in last issue's Christmas Gnomemart, but following complaints from purchasers, the manufacturers have decided to withdraw the Barrymore Bodigon (Pat. No. 74324721b) from sale. It now transpires that the product only works for television celebrities and ordinary members of the general public have found it completely ineffective, leading to problems with the police etc.

Say goodbye to unwanted bodies in your swimming pool with The Patent Barrymore

Bodigon



Simply empty the miracle sachet into the pool and, hey presto, embarrassing corpses disappear overnight, leaving the pool nice 'n' clean for your morning dip! **£10.99**



ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

NO. 94
ALAN BENNETT

I suppose you've got lots of memories of spoons from your Yorkshire childhood?

Oh yes, my aunt Edna had whole drawers full of spoons in her pantry, which looked out onto the outside toilet across the yard. They were her pride and joy, those spoons.

Do you remember any in particular?

Oh yes, there was one wonderful spoon, which she brought back from her holiday in Filey the year before she died. She passed away on the toilet, you know, she was only 93. It was a lovely funeral. I'll never forget the cakes. There was a beautiful Dundee cake with glazed cherries on the top, made specially for the occasion by her best friend Betty, that was Betty Fothergill, who lived at 106. She'd lost her husband Tom in the war, which was very sad. But...

There would have been spoons at this wake, I assume?

Oh yes, all the cutlery would have been laid out immaculately for hours before the guests gathered. Mrs Wainwright would have seen to that. She had a glass eye and a funny way of looking at you. She had terrible varicose veins. But a kinder woman you could never hope to meet. She was run over by a tram, tragically, just outside Sutcliffe and Hutton's, the haberdashers. She was crossing the road to get to the public toilet. I was going to write a story about it, until I got this terrible writer's block, and it all dried up inside. It's a terrible thing for a writer when nothing'll come out.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: Andrew Neill – "Me and My Bird Table".

INCREDIBLE NEW YEAR OFFER!

The director's cut of the acclaimed 1951 black and white wartime classic, starring Kenneth More as Squadron Leader "Squiffy" Squiffington, James Robertson Justice as Reichsmarshall Goering, and a young Richard Attenborough as Lance Corporal "Cowardy" Custard.

Special Features

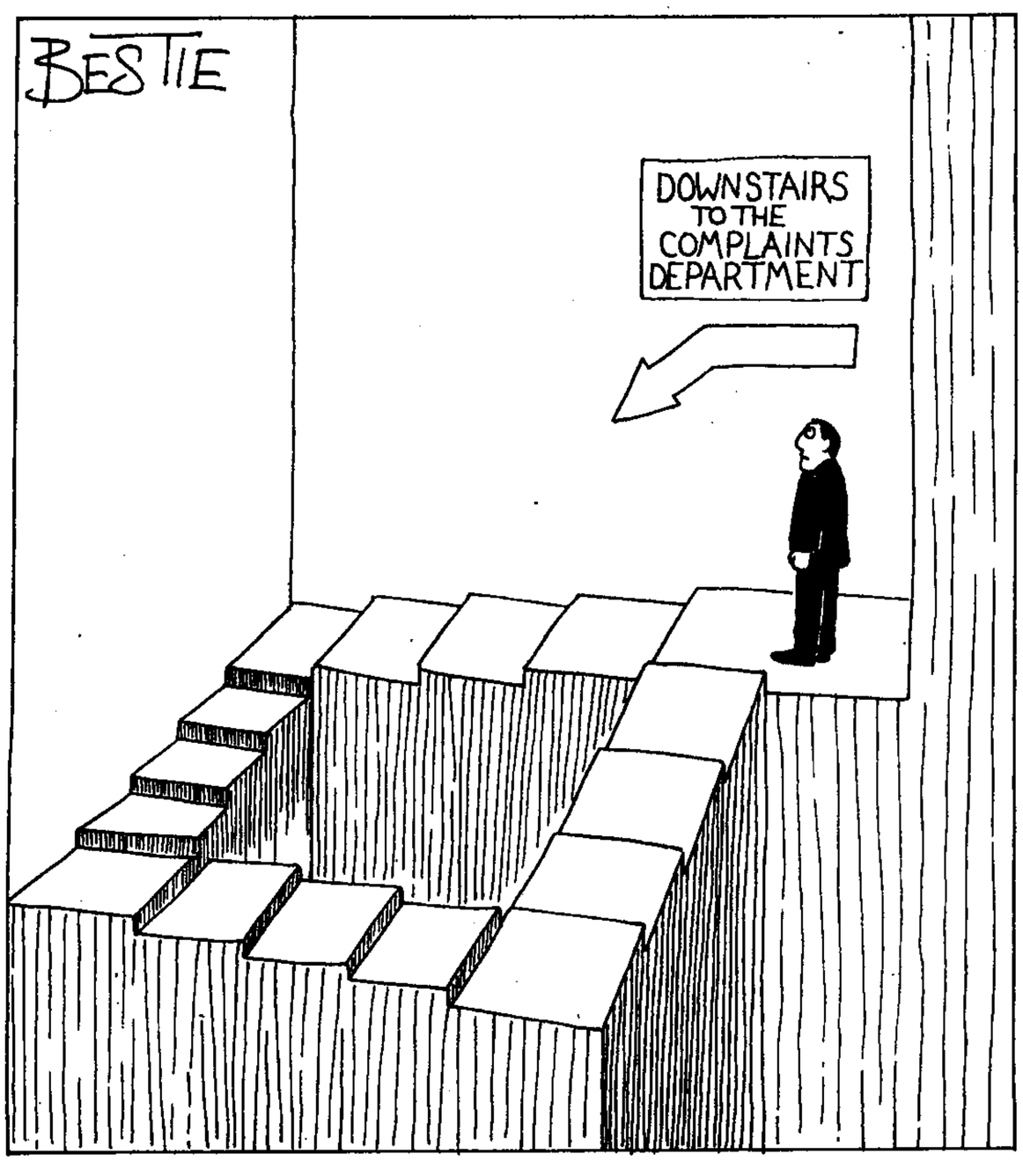
■ ***Never-before-seen footage including aerial shots of Bruges removed at the insistence of the Ministry of Defence.***

■ *A behind-the-scenes documentary, including interviews with legendary director Montgomery Pipe and cinematographer Dermot Lenscap ("Bandits At 4 O'Clock High" and "I Was Monty's Python").*

■ ***The controversial "gay" scene banned by the censor where fighter ace "Chalky" Ginger-Brown shakes hands with Airman "Smiler" Waddington in "an unnecessarily familiar manner".***

Plus

■ Multi-lingual translation facility enabling you to watch the film in Estonian ("Flugda Brugzad"), Japanese ("Tora! Tora! Bruges!") and Latin ("Ad Brugellium Flugaverunt").



LATE NEWS

Post Office — Name Change

CONSIGNIA has announced that they're changing the name of their staff.

"Up till now they've been known by the boring old name of 'postman' but now they've got the exciting new name of 'unemployed'. We believe this new name truly symbolises what sort of a service we'll be offering our customers in the future," said a Consignia spokesman.

"Now, instead of wasting money paying people to deliver the mail on time, we can hire lots of firms of management consultants to try and work out why we're so unpopular."

Time-Wasting Calls Hamper Running Of NHS

THE NHS has revealed today that a steady stream of trivial and irrelevant phone calls is hampering their capability to run a decent service.

"The worst offender is a Mr A Milburn who keeps ringing up at all hours of the day and night," said a NHS spokesman, "with lots of irrelevant ideas about leasing out facilities to private health care providers and woeful pay settlement offers which leave hospital staff too dispirited to properly treat patients.

"People like him need to realise what a nuisance they are," he said. "The lines must be kept open at all times so that hospital staff can ring up McDonalds to find out if they have any job vacancies handy."

(Reuters)

POLLY FILLER ON NIGELLA

SO women are supposed to be suffering from Nigella-Induced Dinner Party Stress Anxiety (NIDPSA), brought on by our fear of failing to live up to the standards of the Domestic Goddess? Oh pur-leeeese!

As someone who has just done Boxing Day Lunch for 11 adults and 13 children (plus three dogs and a cat!!) I can tell you, Nigella, it's not as hard as you make it look!! At the end of the four-course meal (mmm, delicious!!!) a group of close friends and colleagues (including the editor of this paper) charged their glasses and drank to a toast to "Polly, the queen of Christmas"!

I'm embarrassed to mention it but like any good reporter I have to tell it how it was! And more than one guest asked me, "Polly, why on earth haven't they given you a TV series yet?" But according to all these reports in the papers, I was meant to be in the loony bin having a nervous breakdown! What rubbish!

So, how did I manage to out-Nigella Nigella! Well, it wasn't with any help from a certain useless "new man", who spent the entire morning watching the World Penguin Wrestling Championship from Antarctica presented by Paul Ross. (Thanks Simon!) Nor did the toddler Charlie help by complaining that the Lego Hogwart's Castle (bought by yours truly for a bargain £10,000 on a last minute trip to Johannesburg) wasn't as good as the film! Grrr!

NO, the whole feast was put on by yours truly, *toute seule* and on my ownsome! And like sensible women all over the country I wasn't reduced to tears by the thought of living in Nigella's shadow – even though it's quite a big one and it's getting bigger by the day!?! Especially round the hips!?! Actually I've got a recipe for you, Nigella! How about salad and tap water for a change?That should do the trick!

So let's hear no more about NIDPSA!? And let's not put Nigella on a pedestal – it'll probably collapse under the strain! Instead let's salute ourselves: the ordinary working women of Britain who can organise a magical Christmas feast with nothing more than a few leftovers! (And Notting Hill's elite catering service at www.yourfeetup.com.)

Happy New Year!

Pollyella

"Scram!... This is a McDougal Clan gathering only"

BUILDERS SAY MADONNA 'LAZY'

by Our Showbiz Staff

BRITISH builders working on Madonna's property have controversially commented that the pop megastar is nothing but a lazy, work-shy, good-for-nothing.

Said one of the men working on her property, "If you ask me, Madonna is an extremely un-motivated person – take yesterday for instance – she got up around mid-day, dumped her kid on a child-minder, after which she got someone in to clean the house, do the shopping, mow the lawn, do the ironing, cook her meals, taste her food, do her nails, answer the phone, service the pool, drive her car and complete the vocals on her

latest album. She's also incredibly foul-mouthed, which I think is a fucking disgrace."

IT'S PANTO TIME
OH, NO, IT ISN'T - OH, YES IT IS!
BOX OFFICE
I USED TO! LOVE IT! YOU WILL TOO!
FREDDY FRUITCAKE ALADDIN
LOOK OUT! HE'S BEHIND YOU!
NO! YOU CAN'T CHANGE CHANNELS!
I'M SORRY I DON'T SEEM TO HAVE SEEN THE T.V. COMMERCIAL THAT THE LEWD JOKE REFERRED TO
THEY SHOULD DO A RAP PANTO!
PARENTS CAN BE SO EMBARRASS-ING!
JUST BECAUSE A MAN PLAYS A WOMAN DOESN'T MEAN HE'S GAY BUT I EXPECT HE IS ANYWAY
BRATT

HUNT FOR GUESTS CONTINUES AS B52s BLAST BORES CEREMONY — 'No Let-Up' Says Bush

by Our Bores Staff Borebara Amiel (Lady Black of Crossharbore)

THE first Bore Of The Year Awards ceremony since the tragic events of September 11 began in confusion when very few of the invited guests could find their way to the chosen venue – the now legendary Bora Bora cave complex high in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan, formerly the country retreat of the world's most wanted man, Osama bin Laden.

Mr bin Laden was unfortunately unable to attend the ceremony in person, but a video was sent to the organisers, showing him welcoming his non-Islamic guests into his lovely cave and chuckling at the thought of them all dying a hideous death.

ADMIRAL STUFFLEBEEM

Greeting the guests as master of ceremonies was former **President Clintstone**, accompanied by his daughters Kensington and **Chelsea**, who said it was a great privilege to accept Lord Gnome's kind cheque for £100,000.

The former President began by asking guests to join him in a two-minutes silence as a mark of respect for himself. The President wept openly as the handful of guests lit candles to see what was going on in the caves, and he then said that it gave him immense pleasure to hand over the rest of the proceedings to that "incomparable television host and celebrity homosexual, **Mr Graham Borton**".

Mr Norton bounded onto the pile of ammunition boxes which formed a makeshift stage and amused guests by quipping "That was a long one – the two minutes silence, I mean."

DONALD RUMSFELD

There was a distant roll of gunfire as Mr Norton opened the envelope containing the name of this year's winner of the coveted "Grand Bore Of The Year" award, sponsored by Railtrack.

"The judges have unanimously decided," he announced, "to make no award this year, as a mark of respect to themselves. But they would like it to be known that, had they made the award, it would undoubtedly have been given jointly to all those journalists and military experts who managed to fill millions of pages of newspapers and thousands of hours of airtime in covering and analysing every last detail of the war without at any stage having the slightest idea what was going on."

The non-award was promptly seized by a bulky figure in a loose-fitting bright blue burqa, with the cry of "I am hereby liberating this award on behalf of the world's journalists, of whom I am the unelected leader by virtue of my status as the Supreme World Global Affairs Editor-in-Chief of the BBC."

GENERAL SIR MICHAEL ROSE

After Mr Norton had told **John Simpson** *(for it was he)* to "burqa off back to Kabul", guests were served with a delicious stew of Sainsbury's Organic Sheep's Eyes by TV's **Jamie Oliver**, which the naked chef had "rustled up" with cries of "lovely jubbly", "pukka" and "can I have my money now?".

As guests gagged at the sight of this regional delicacy, they were entertained by the spectacle of a number of elderly female celebrities, led by **Dame Cilla Black**, **Dame Joan Collins** and **Dame Barbara Windsor**, re-enacting scenes from the year's most boring film Moulin Rouge in their corsets and suspender belts.

As the guests struggled to escape, their exit was blocked by heavily armed members of the Northern Alliance, who had heard about the sheep's eyes and thought they would make a very welcome change from the air-dropped yellow bags of peanuts-in-tomato sauce kindly provided by President Hindu Bush.

YASMIN ALIBHAI-BROWN

The microphone was then taken by Mr **Rolf Harris**, the celebrated artist and critic, to introduce the winner of the Enron "Most Boring Newcomer Of The Year" award. Sir Rolf told the slumbering guests how he had painted all the candidates for this trophy, in the styles of Van Gogh, Gaugin or Monet, although they had all ended up looking the same.

"But the undoubted winner," said Sir Rolf, "is the new leader of the Conservative Party, **Mr Iain Duncan Smith**."

A balding man shuffled forward to say that he agreed with everything **Mr Blair** had said and, after coughing nervously for some hours, Mr Smith was "taken out" by a rogue "smart missile" which had defected to the Taliban.

MICHAEL ANCRAM

Mr Jonathan Ross was next to seize the microphone to announce the nominations for the "Female Bore Of The Year". "I certainly wouldn't mind giving some of these ladies a quick 'bore', if you get my drift," he quipped from his audience, "but the nominees include **Miss Cherie Booth** QC, for her tireless campaigning on behalf of starving lawyers, **Miss Stella Rimington** for her memoirs 'What Kind Of Fool MI?', **Miss Amanda Platel** for her celebrated election video 'Don't Be Vague, Vote For Blair' and **Miss Rachel Whiteread** for her

statue of a Fox's glacier mint in Trafalgar Square."

The runaway winner, however, was the ever-young and ever-lovely **Mrs Anne Robinson**, for her quiz show 'The Weakest Drink' and her incomparable memoirs 'My Name Is Anne Robinson And I Am A Terrific Bore'.

MARTIN AMIS

As guests began to show advanced symptoms of hypothermia in the sub-zero temperatures of the notorious Afghan winter, they were entertained by a poetry reading from the distinguished Liverpudlian man of letters **Sir Paul McCartney**. By the time he reached the lines *"Happiness is not sadness/It's sadness dressed up as happiness/Or it could be the other way around"*, so many guests had expressed their appreciation by falling asleep that they had to be woken up by members of the US Special Forces, who began shooting each other, causing considerable collateral damage.

As the damage cleared, **Mr Richard Madeley** and **Miss Judy Finnegan** took the rostrum to announce the winners of the Swissair "Most Boring Couple Of The Year" award. As Miss Finnegan's blouse once again fell discreetly to the floor, arousing considerable excitement from **Mr Richard Desmond**, who had bought the rights to the ceremony for his magazine *Afghan Babes* (Surely *OK*? Ed.), they read out the names of the short-listed couples: to wit, the **Earl and Countess of Wessex**; **His Royal Highness Prince Charles** and the **Mistress Royal, Dame Camilla Parker-Knowles**; **Professor John Bayley** and the late **Dame Iris Murdoch**.

"But the winners by a kilometre," announced the legendary breakfast show presenters (now appearing on Channel Four's mid-afternoon 'No One's Watching' show), "are **Neil and Christine Hamilton**." the celebrated publicity-seekers then performed their now-famous "nude tableau" sequence, as Adam and Eve receiving tempting envelopes from the wily serpent, **Mr Mohammed Asp Fayed**.

PICKETT'S LOCK

While **Mr Peter Mandelson** mingled with the guests in exchange for an undisclosed sum, the inimitable and much-loved **Dame Judy Dench** graciously announced the winner of the most-coveted award of them all, the Marconi "Lifetime Of Boredom Achievement" prize.

"The judges," she shouted above the heavy drone of B52 bombers, "had no hesitation in saluting a man whose books, speeches and bottles of claret have made him a legend in the long history of tedium."

As the portly figure of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, **Lord Jenkins** of Hillhead, stepped up to the rostrum to begin his six-hour acceptance speech, a "daisy-cutter" bomb bearing the legend "Ramadan This Up Your Ass, Beardie, With Love From Big Dubya" made a direct hit on the Bora Bora cave complex, resulting in the collapse of the roof and the burial of all the remaining guests under a shower of the following items, viz hundreds of tons of video games and badly-drawn Harry Potter merchandising, thousands of Gandalf 'n' Galadriel "Bored of the Rings" plastic figurines; hundreds of thousands of unsold copies of **Sir Michael Jagger**'s solo album "Piled High In The Doorway"; ten million dead sheep (courtesy of **Mr Nick Brown** and **Mrs Margaret Beckett**); five million flaming cow carcases (ditto); billions of counterfeit euros; and one unidentified "decommissioned weapon" personally handed over by **Mr Martin McGuinness** to **General John de Chastelain**.

YE TIMES OF LONDON

November 4, 1605

Editor: Mafter Peter Stoatherd Efq. Lickfpittle Extraordinary to Ye Dirtie Diggerfrom Ye Undifcovered Colony of Auftralia

GUY FAWKES TO BE GIVEN OFFICE IN YE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

YE WORLD of Weftminfter was rocked to its foundations yefterday, by ye newes that Mafter Guy Fawkes, a well-known Papift and fcoundrel, hath been given all ye facilities of ye Houfe of Commons, including an allowance of 12 groats a yeare and a cafe of sack.

YE SHOCK AND YE HORROR

Mafter Fawkes hath chosen an office in ye cellars, and hath requefted to be granted 36 barrels, 18 bushels of finest gunpowder and a box of ye newe-fangled phofphorous matches (as brought back from ye Newe Worlde by Sir Walter Raleigh, to light up ye pipe-full of tobacco).

Only one voice was heard protefting against ye decision by ye government — to wit Mafter Duncan Smith, ye new leader of ye Tory faction.

BEWARE YE IDS OF NOVEMBER

Mafter Smith coughed pafsionately for several minutes, before declaring "thif marks the ende of ye bipartifan approach which we have followed since ye time of Henry VIII".

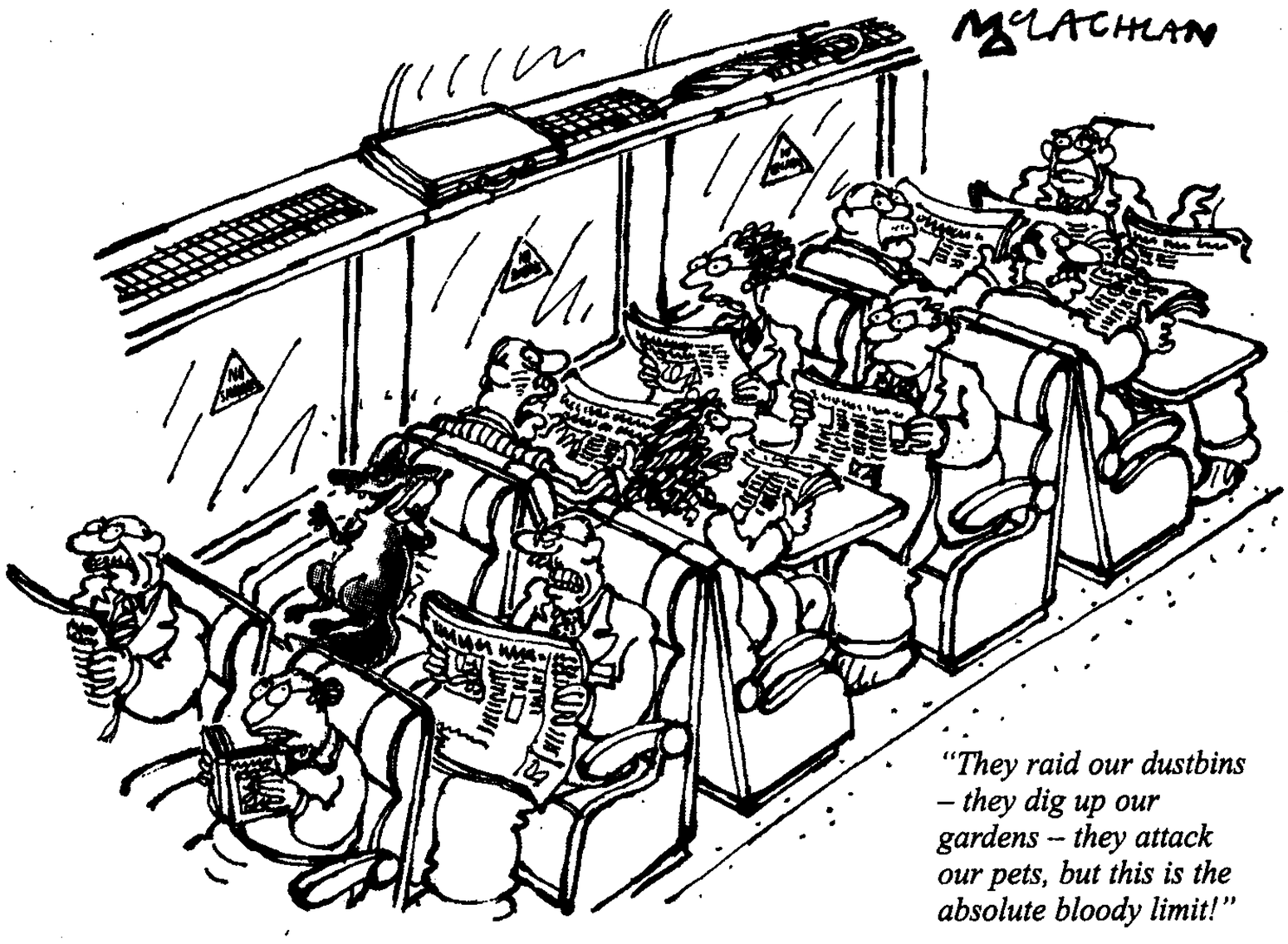
But quoth a defiant Guido Fawkes, "This is a fufs about nothing. It hath been all blown up out of proportion."

ON OTHER PAGES

Mafter Coren contributes his usual witty column about late events in ye remote village of Cricklewood. Page 14

Mafter Parrish "Why I Am Giving Up Ye Parliamentary Sketch - Because Nothing Happeneth There Anymore. Page 21

Unfunny Cartoon by Rubens



"They raid our dustbins – they dig up our gardens – they attack our pets, but this is the absolute bloody limit!"

World of Soccer

KNEE APOLOGISES FOR PLAYER'S CONDUCT

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man Urinating On The Bar In The Boston Arms

THE world of soccer was rocked to its foundations yesterday when a Neasden player was found sober at the team's annual Christmas party held at Sin-derella's Lap Dancin' 'n' All-Night Bingo Disco Nite spot off the North Circular.

Keep It Tight At The Back

Said ashen-faced Neasden manager Ron Knee, 59, "I cannot name the player because I passed out long before the incident took place, but I suspect the culprit was the Captain, Baldy Pevsner."

He continued, "I would like to apologise to everyone in the club for the fact that Baldy was stone cold sober throughout the evening. It is not the kind of behaviour you associate with a professional footballer."

The Club Chairman, Lord Cohen of Neasden (formerly Brigadier Sir Buffy Cohen), said, "I will be fining whoever it was a month's wages and will be suggesting a hundred hours of community drinking in the Boston Arms."

They Drink It's All Over

The fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) said, "It is all too easy to blame the players. We turn them into gods and expect them to behave like drunken gits. And then they go and let us down."

LATE SCORE

Anthrax Charity Shield
(2nd Leg First Round)

Dynamo Kandahar 3
AFC Neasden 0
(Pevsner o.g.)

(Game stopped due to Friendly Fire)

***Man of the Match**: O. Bin Laden (who was very difficult to find in the box)*

Rudolph The No-Nosed Reindeer

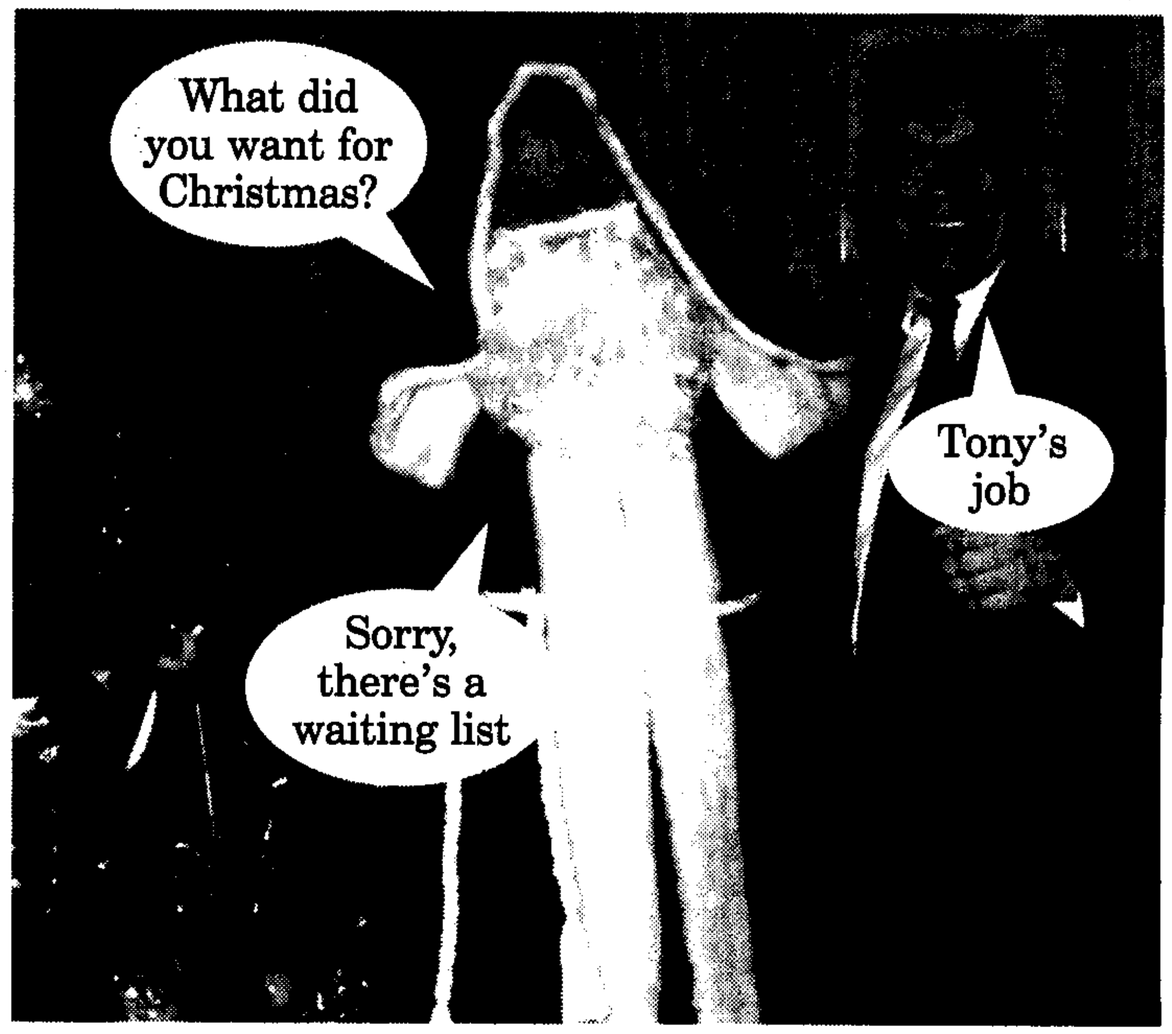
It was a Klargester 2,600 litre cesspit, about 12ft high with a square lid. Police say the thieves must have used a vehicle to steal it.

Peterborough Evening Telegraph

CUSTOMS chiefs are celebrating a "significant blow" to drug dealers after seizing cocaine worth £38 million.

Coventry Evening Telegraph

SANTA FAILS TO MEET TARGET



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Cranks
The health food shop

So. Farewell
Then
Cranks.

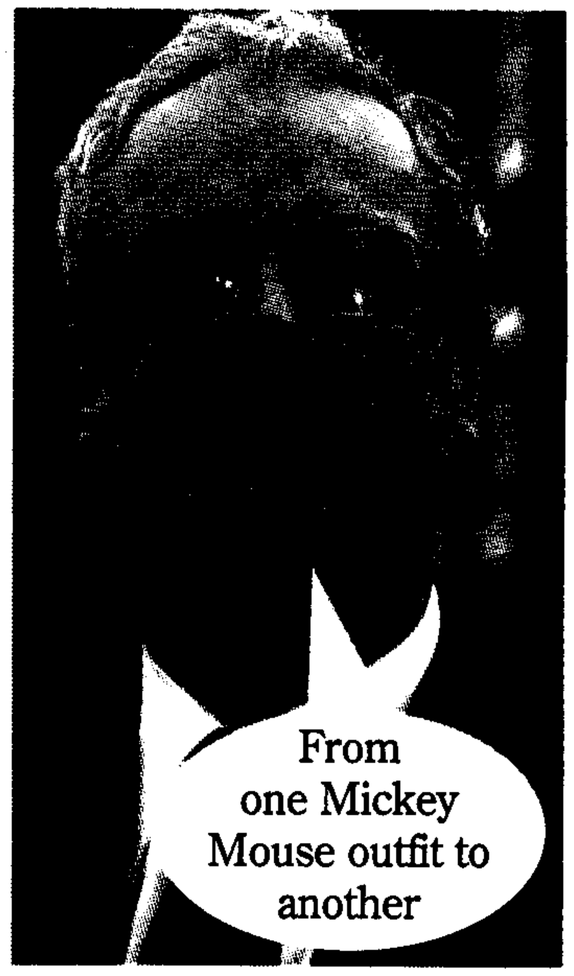
"Lentil soup?"

That was your
Catchphrase.

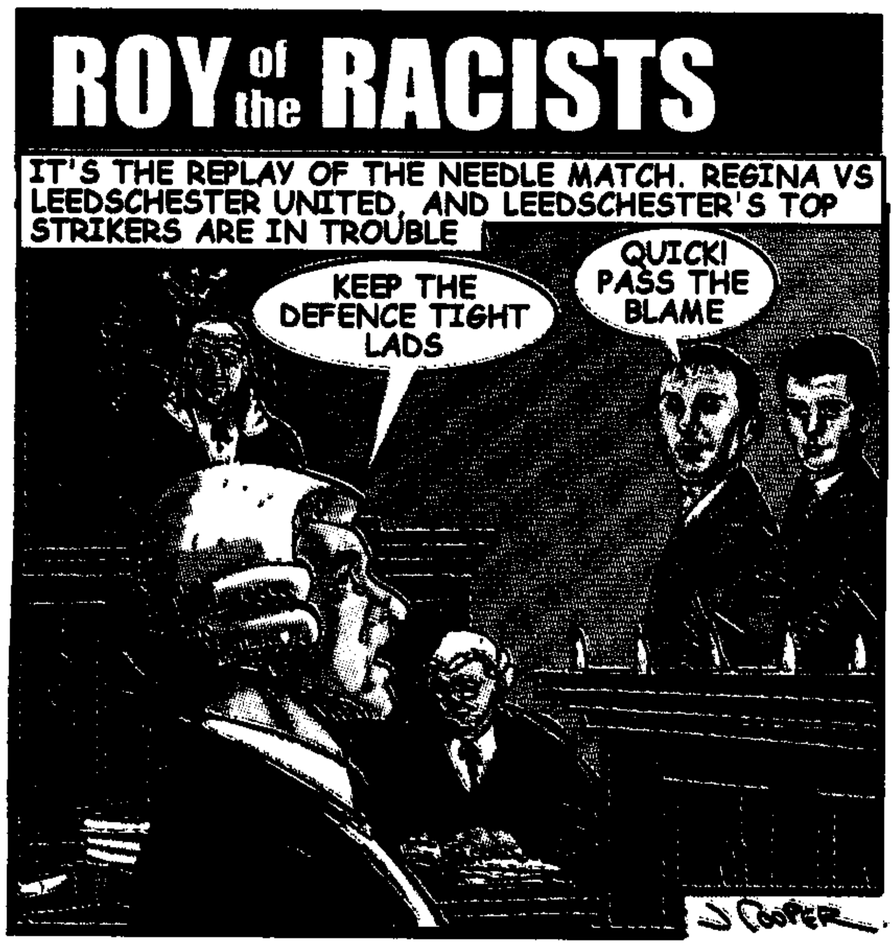
Unfortunately your
Profits
Were not so
Healthy.

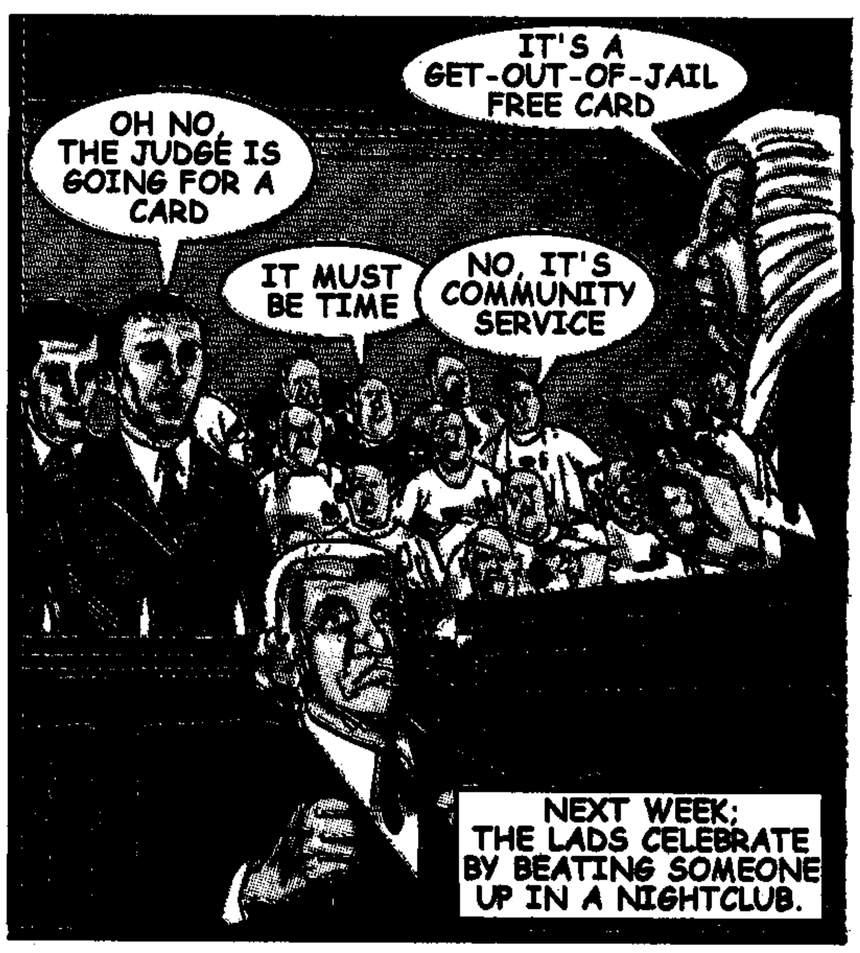
E.J. Thribb
(17½ calories)

CHRIS SMITH GOES TO DISNEY

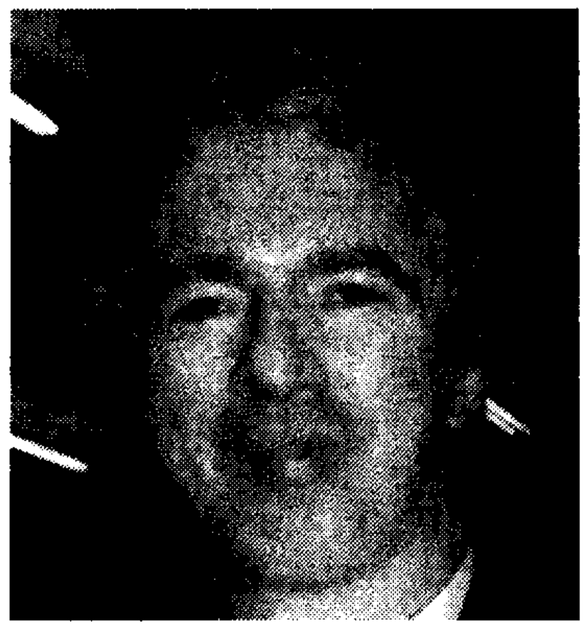


ROY of the RACISTS


IT'S THE REPLAY OF THE NEEDLE MATCH. REGINA VS LEEDSCHESTER UNITED, AND LEEDSCHESTER'S TOP STRIKERS ARE IN TROUBLE
KEEP THE DEFENCE TIGHT LADS
QUICK! PASS THE BLAME
J COOPER


OH NO, THE JUDGE IS GOING FOR A CARD
IT'S A GET-OUT-OF-JAIL FREE CARD
IT MUST BE TIME
NO, IT'S COMMUNITY SERVICE
NEXT WEEK: THE LADS CELEBRATE BY BEATING SOMEONE UP IN A NIGHTCLUB.

DIARY



PETER STOTHARD
Editor of The Times

SEPTEMBER 11 2001

Now it is ten o'clock at night. I have been allowed to stay up late. I cannot see very much but I can see this much: I cannot see very much. So what do I mean when I say "see"? Not very much.

Talk about historic! This is such a historic day it must be one of the most historic of all historic days in the entire history of historic days. Mark my words, it will be one of those "what-were-you-doing-at-the-time" days, truly a day to remember what was happening when the thing you remember happening first happened.

So for the record let me write down that The Editor of The Times (that's me, folks, swank, swank!) was chipping at a chocolate pudding with other Very Important People (VIPs) on the board of Times Newspapers when the whispered message arrived. The twin towers had been destroyed by aeroplanes flying into them. Just like the chocolate pudding had been destroyed by The Editor chipping away at it – but obviously a whole lot worse because, let's face it, the chocolate pudding didn't involve loss of life.

He at once took the important decision to skip coffee, and to find out all he could about those so-called "twin towers".

For instance, exactly HOW MANY of these "twin towers" were there? And just WHY were they known as "towers"? And the aeroplanes – were they in the air at the time? It was time to find out. Time to know.

This is what journalists do. We know.

And we know we know.

And we know we know we know. This is what this journalist – a distinguished writer of great distinguishment – did. But what did he mean by "did"? Did was one of those don't-do words, and, as don't-do words go, he didn't be doing with "did". Except on truly historic occasions that make history.

Like this one did.

But one thing's for sure: things will never be the same again.

SEPTEMBER 12

This morning's edition is already in the drawer where I keep the newspapers that I want to save for the grandchildren, along with the newspaper reports on Oasis's truly brill first concert at Wembley and unconfirmed reports that Adolf Hitler is still alive. This is what makes The Times a great newspaper: it has lots of really hot news as well as being great.

Only in New York, as they say! The twin towers – so called, I have now discovered, because there were two of them, minimum, and they sort of "towered" in the air – make a lovely snug fit on the front page of The Times. It seems wrong to write in these notes how wonderful is a pictorial story about planes going into skyscrapers – but I can't stop myself! They really could of been designed for the broadsheet shape. Thank goodness it wasn't the twin bungalows – or we'd certainly of been "stymied"!

Things will never be quite the same again.

SEPTEMBER 15

Editors are only rarely where the story really is. To have been in Manhattan when the towers came down would have been an unlikely chance. But the New York story (and what a story!) is also here. It has been here since the moment – and it really couldn't of been longer than a moment – that the nose cone hit the window. We could only imagine what it was like behind those flames. Hot, very hot; in fact, almost too hot. But if we could not see in and ask what it was like, we could and did look out and back and round and round. Is there history here, and, if so, does it have lessons? And if there are lessons there, do they have history?

55BC: The Roman Invasion. 1066: The Battle of Hastings. Historical dates, both of them. But what do they tell us of now? And whichever way you look there are more and more really historical dates: 1314. 1516. 1718. 1920. Who was it who said that those who do not understand history are condemned to repeat it? And – just as important – who was it who said that those who do not understand history are condemned to repeat it? One thing is for sure. Most things will never be exactly the same again.

SEPTEMBER 18

In journalism it is never too late to ask what one's words might mean. But what are words? And what exactly do we "mean" by "mean"?

Sometimes, this editor worries that he might be wrong for this job. That he might be too word-based, too braney. One thing is for sure. Since September 11, entertainment is out. Politics is big again. And that can't be bad. We now have up to ten pages a day examining really in-depthly the historical and political consequences of what is happening (The Osama Effect: Are Moustaches the New Beards? The World of Islam: Why Britney Says No To the Burqa.) And we are talking quite naturally about places we never knew existed. At conference, my deputy says "Mogadishu". "Bless you" I say. But one thing's for sure. Quite a few things will be roughly the same again.

DECEMBER 1

At long last, it's business as usual. From where I'm sitting, it looks like at long last everything is the same again. It did mean something to say that the world has changed for ever, but only for a very short time. All the events seem much longer than three months ago. Reality is back almost before we realised it had gone. At the Christmas parties, no-one talks of bin Laden anymore, so there's thankfully no need to "gen up" on him! Instead, Robbie and Nicole seem set to top the Christmas charts – and from the historical perspective, that can't be bad.

So what did it all "mean" – that's what some of us want to know. Where did it all fit in, exactly? How should we see it, this tragedy, then? You know what? Looked at from the interlectual point of view, it's a funny old world, it really is.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

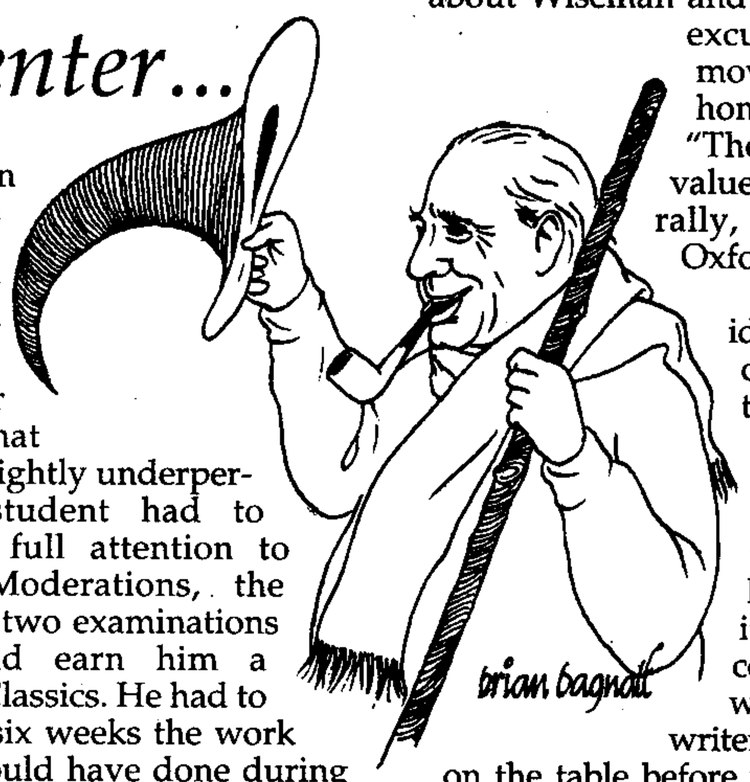
Celeb

LIGGER

AN OFFICIAL FORM FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA ABOUT INCREASING YOUR ALIMONY PAYMENTS, SIR.
OH NO...
THEY WANT TO ASSESS HOW YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE LAST ARRANGEMENT.
BASTARDS.
WHAT SHALL I PUT DOWN IN THE SECTION HEADED DEPENDENTS?
UM...
PUT "CLEAN. AND HAVE BEEN FOR YEARS"...

Literary Review

If I were a Carpenter...



Tolkien: A Biography

Michael White

(Little Brown, £16.99/£10.99)

THERE was never the slightest chance, of course, that publishers would be able to resist the lure of the Tolkien cash-in. Messrs HarperCollins (see Eye 1041) have unleashed a display case full of repackaged and overpriced editions of the old boy's oeuvre; every fantasy artist who ever sketched a portrait of Shagrat the orc is bursting into print with books of illustrations; and now, hastily retouched after its original debut in an obscure US "Critical Lives" series, and only just in time to catch the end-of-year movie tide, comes Tolkien: A Biography.

No prizes for deducing that this flimsy contrivance by the, um, "renowned biographer" Michael White is a deeply idle piece of work. Pitched, one imagines, at the averagely bright American teenager – "the School Certificate was an early form of school examination comparable to the modern GCSE taken by sixteen year-olds in Britain" runs the first footnote — awash with hilarious Yankee-isms (undergrads parading with their "beaux", Oxford dons described as "masters" and so on) it was clearly knocked together in about a fortnight. To take only one procedural complaint, Tolkien died as recently as 1973 and yet Mr White's opus, though notably *au fait* with the making of Peter Jackson's film of *The Fellowship of the Ring* contains not a single interview with friend or colleague actually conducted by the biographer.

But to question Mr White's industry in this way would be ungenerous, for *Tolkien: A Biography* eventually – in fact all too quickly – declares itself as a charming act of literary homage. Not so much to its subject, curiously, but to Humphrey Carpenter, whose own biography was published as far back as 1977.

The value that Mr White places on Carpenter's work, and the inspiration he drew from it, can be glimpsed on nearly every page. I was particularly struck, for example, by their respective accounts of Tolkien's time at Oxford in the years immediately before the Great War. Carpenter reveals that in 1913 a slightly underperforming student had to "turn his full attention to Honour Moderations, the first of the two examinations that would earn him a degree in Classics. He had to cram into six weeks the work that he should have done during the previous four terms..." In the end our man gets a second, but he achieves "a 'pure alpha', a practically faultless paper, in his special subject, Comparative Philology."

Clearly deeply impressed by this guiding star, White explains that "Tolkien had to work flat-out in preparation for his Honour Moderation at Oxford, the first of two sets of examinations that would lead to a degree in Classics. He had not worked consistently through his first year, which meant he had to cram into a couple of months what he should have spent a year doing.' However, he produces 'an almost faultless paper in his special subject, Comparative Philology..."

Above all, perhaps, one admires Mr White's modesty. Most biographers, after all, take a line of their own. A similar bout of cap-doffing attends his discussion of the response to *The Lord of the Rings*, where he quotes exactly the same list of critical comments and in almost exactly the same order. Carpenter's text then runs: "Now that all three volumes had appeared... the critics were able to make a full assessment." White can only defer to such sagacity. "It was only after the third volume had appeared... that critics could properly assess the work in its entirety and make their overarching pronouncements."

A bit later, covering his subject's final years, Carpenter offers a paragraph describing Tolkien's meeting with an old friend, Christopher Wiseman, and a visit to his brother Hilary's fruit farm, followed by a second paragraph listing the venerable storyteller's awards and honorary degrees: "perhaps most gratifying of all" was the one bestowed by Oxford. Not to be outdone White, too, supplies a paragraph about Wiseman and the fruit farm excursion, before moving on to the honorary degrees. "The one he valued most", naturally, came from Oxford.

You get the idea? No one – certainly not this reviewer – would dream of accusing Mr White of plagiarism. Neither is it illegal to compose a book with another writer's work open on the table before you, though it might be said that if you are simply intending to change the words around you might take the precaution of covering your tracks more effectively than Mr White has done. But it is a shame that Mr White's admiration for Humphrey Carpenter didn't extend to the odd credit (Humph turns up once, in the bibliography). Meanwhile, anyone who has mistakenly shelled out £16.99 for this spirited exercise in recycling is advised to return it immediately to Little, Brown with a letter reminding the publisher of its responsibilities under the trades descriptions act.

Futureschlock

JG Ballard

The Complete Short Stories

(Flamingo £25)

WHAT is the use of James Graham Ballard? Touted as he is, the great exponent of visionary science fiction, one might imagine him some sort of techno-soothsayer, a space age Nostradamus. Yet his fictions are for the most part weirdly dystopic post-mortems, involving the same tediously recycled images: encroaching jungles, deserted cities, rusting structures, crashed planes, empty swimming pools.

They owe more to art (mainly the Surrealists) or even the whimsical magic of fairy tales (singing flowers, a crystallised forest), than science. Significantly Dali, de Chirico, Magritte are namechecked more than once in these stories; but if Ballard doesn't know much about science at least he knows what he likes. And what he likes is corruption and decay.

Admittedly, most science fiction is closer in spirit to astrology than astronomy, and reading it to find out what the future holds is about as reliable as crossing a fortune-teller's palm with silver. The commonest trick is to take some existing trend or threat and extend it to its logical but therefore absurd conclusion. Because of Aids, people have less sex: what if they had none at all? Sex would be made compulsory. Ballard gets typing. *Love in a colder climate* is the result.

In his novel *Hello America*, the 1970s energy crisis causes America to grind to a halt and all its people migrate back to Europe. In *High Rise* the unneighbourly behaviour of tower block inhabitants is extended to all-out civil war. In the title story of *Myths of the Near Future* depletion of the ozone layer makes everyone go crazy and, er, think they're astronauts. His most recent novel, *Super-Cannes*, depicts the violent effects of sensory deprivation in an office-mall gated community. It's murder in them thar atriums.

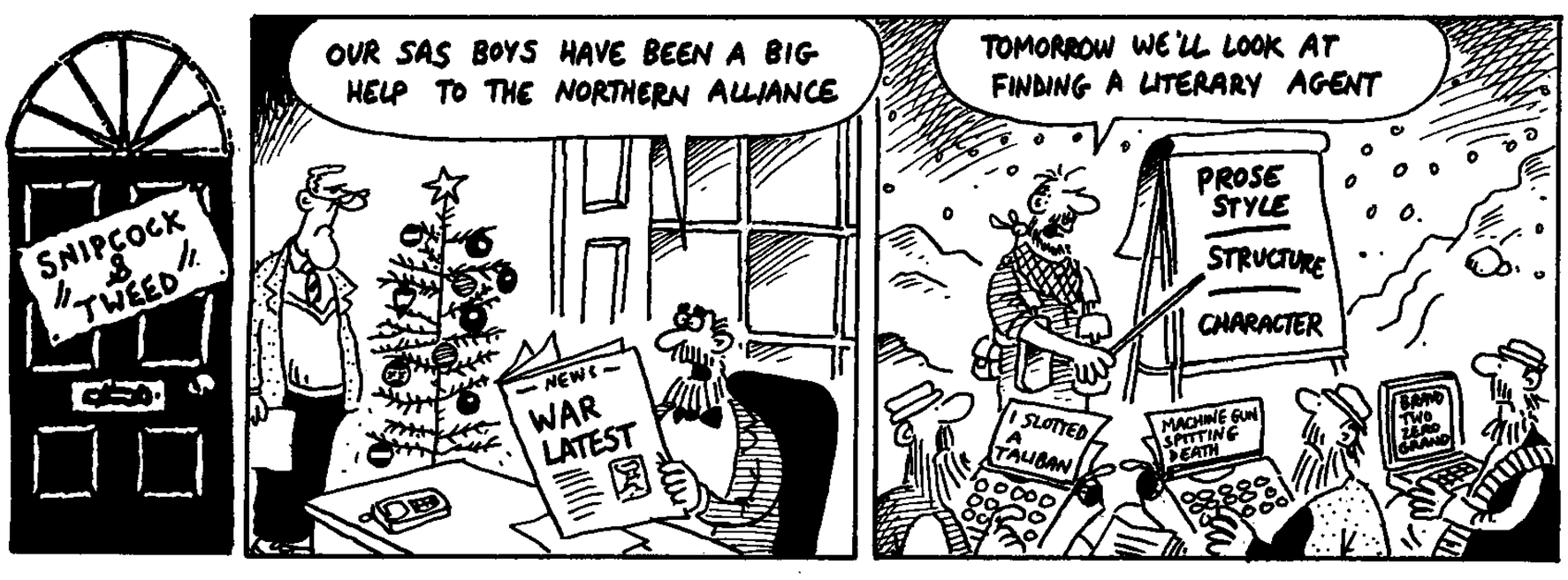
In each case a single cause is given a single, exaggerated effect. So what is Ballard's message to the planet? Ecological disaster. The pornotopian tendency of modern culture. Cyber-emancipation. Look out mankind, your number is up.

In his best work he pulls it off. But his best work is contained in novels such as *Crash* and *Empire of the Sun*. The early stories generally aim no higher than they reach, which is the level of pulp-magazines like *Science Fantasy* and *New Worlds*. And most of his stories were published in the 50s and 60s, the golden age of such literature. Time travel, the cities of the future, living metal sculptures, that sort of thing.

The later stories show occasional sparks of brilliance, but many of them begin to look like sketches and try-outs for the novels with which, since the 70s, Ballard has occupied most of his time. They are not so much gems as germs. They state a premise, introduce a couple of rather forgettable characters, explore the idea for a couple of pages and then, perhaps to catch the post for the Interzone deadline, finish the whole thing off in a couple more.

The last short story, "Report from an Obscure Planet", was published nearly a decade ago. Like several others it has a millennial feel, which now feels rather passé. There are a good few squibs and fillers. Many of them have much better titles than content – "The Terminal Beach", "The Comsat Angels" (a name later taken by a pop group) or "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered As A Downhill Motor Race" – while something like "Why I Want To Fuck Ronald Reagan" seems oddly less prescient now than when it appeared in an underground magazine in 1968. Relating events of the future as though they were now history is handy for cheap laughs (Dan Quayle as president in 2008?) but does it really belong in a hardback book?

And such a big heavy book: over 3lb, almost 1,200 pages. It is



hard to see whom it is aimed at, given its cost. Certainly not the fainthearted or vaguely-wondering browser or gift recipient. Possibly some completist or long-serving fan wishing to replace his dog-eared old paperbacks of the 10 smaller collections from which most of these tales were gathered.

Books & Bookmen

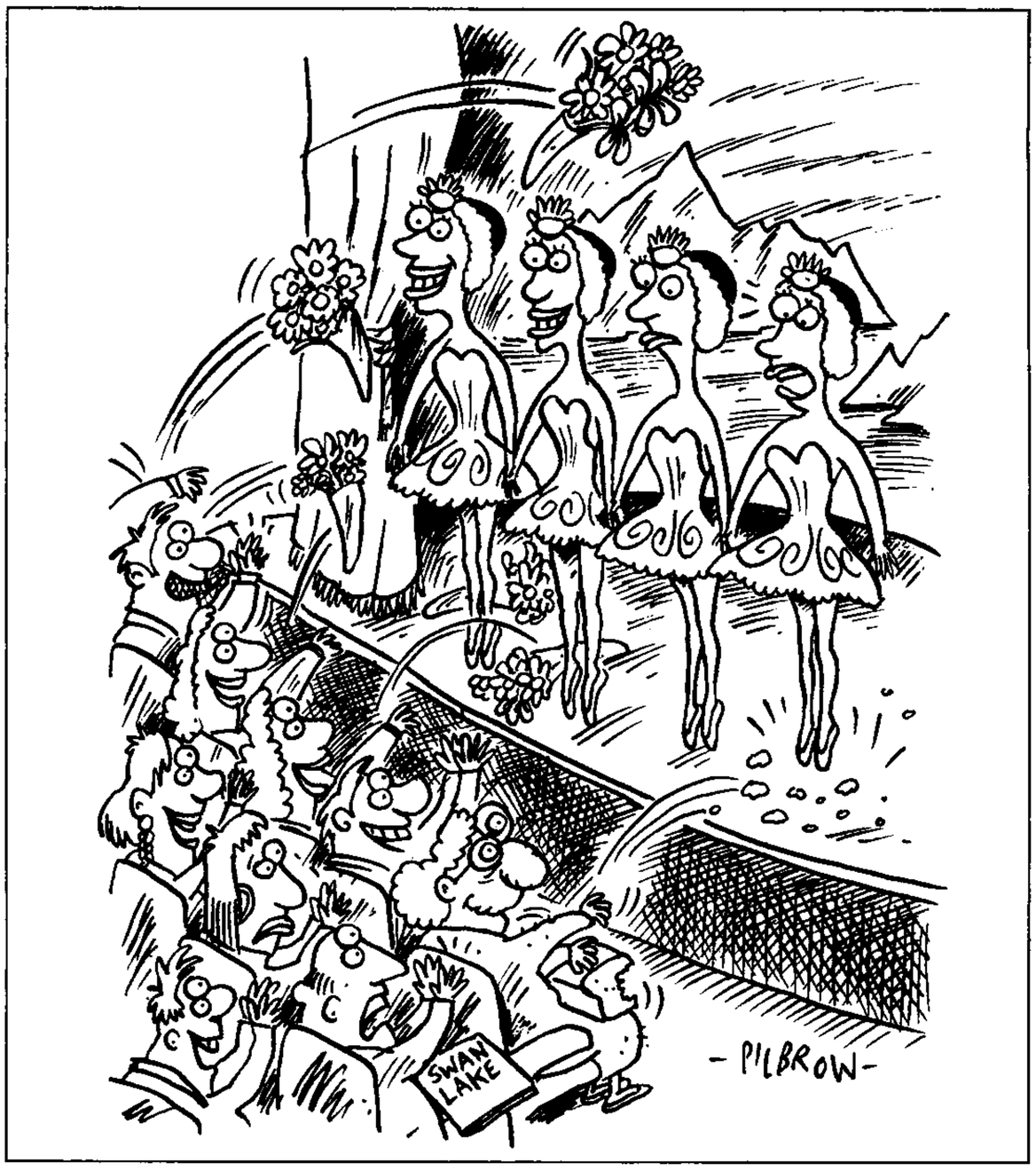
■ READERS of the December/January *Literary Review*'s "From the Pulpit" feature will doubtless have been edified by A.C. Grayling's views on the role of the reviewer. Expressed in the calm, sonorous tones Dr Grayling's readers know so well, this homily on the responsibilities of those who review books stressed the value of honesty.

"There are many ways in which reviewing can be dishonest," Grayling decided, going on to cite an example from "no less a personage than the self-appointed doyen of the literature dons, Terry Eagleton". Having exposed Prof Eagleton's apparent habit of misrepresenting authors "by saying 'the author says X' and omitting the author's rider Y", Grayling goes on to suggest that this might not be intentional on Eagleton's part; "he might merely be stupid or lazy. But I suppose one must doubt this, and hope these are not the ethics of criticism he teaches his students at Manchester University".

Nothing like a public spat between a couple of media dons, of course; but, really, it might have been more "honest" of A.C. to mention the, ah, not entirely favourable review of his latest work, *The Meaning of Things: Applying Philosophy to Life* which our Terry recently contributed to the *Independent on Sunday*.

■ *HIGH praise in the* London Review of Books *for Miranda Carter's new biography of Anthony Blunt. LRB regular Nicholas Penny calls it an "exemplary account", full of "astute observations": Carter is not only "shrewdly sceptical" but also "exceedingly judicious".*

Miranda Carter must be delighted – as must her husband, John Lanchester, who sits on the editorial board of, er, the London Review of Books.



■ EVEN novelists who sell by the bucketload no matter what will do anything for more publicity, it seems.

American crime writer Patricia Cornwell was over the papers like a rash last week "staking her reputation" on the belief that the artist Walter Sickert was Jack the Ripper, responsible for the Whitechapel murders of 1888. The *Daily Getsmuchworse* reported breathlessly that Cornwell "claims she has finally cracked the case that has baffled Scotland Yard for more than 100 years", presenting the author's revelations as utterly new and all her own work. The *Torygraph* said much the same thing.

Startling stuff – or it would be if Cornwell hadn't been trundling out an unproven and unprovable story that is now more than a century old: Sickert has been one of the many suspects almost from the off, a fact seemingly acknowledged only by the *Grauniad*. Far more astonishing is the information that Cornwell has spent £3m on 31 of the artist's canvases "completely ripping up one", according to the *Express*, in the search for DNA clues.

It could be that this is exaggeration, and that a small corner of a canvas had been snipped off for tests. However, if the painting was destroyed and had been bought in Britain, surely it should come under the Waverley Criteria – the rules invoked to decide whether important British works of art and historical document should be saved for the nation or whether their export should be permitted. Had the likes of the Tate known that a Sickert was leaving the country simply to be torn / snipped / whatever at a rich woman's whim, they might have had something to say.

In any case, the facts that Cornwell has a new book out and that the "revelations" were made on a primetime US chat show rather than in a serious historical documentary or article are not thought to be coincidental.

TURKEY OF THE YEAR?

■ ON THE quiz *Play Your Cards Right*, Bruce Forsyth encouraged contestants to gamble with the catchphrase "Higher? Lower?" When it came to sales of his autobiography *Bruce*, for which Gordon Wise of Macmillan's Sidgwick and Jackson paid out an astonishing £550,000, the answer was lower. Much lower.

Published in October, the book failed to make its presence felt in Whitaker BookTrack's highest new entries that month or the following one. This means that, at worst, it might well have sold less than 310 copies in its first week, being trounced by the likes of *Modern Engineering Mathematics*, published by the educational publisher Prentice Hall. Even with a festive boost, unsigned copies of the book languished around the 1,100th position in the Amazon charts. Signed copies were even less in demand, coming in 2,600th.

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

When you're shooting you are standing in the forest for really long periods of time, so you end up looking at the leaves and the sky and the trees and you have a lot of time to meditate.

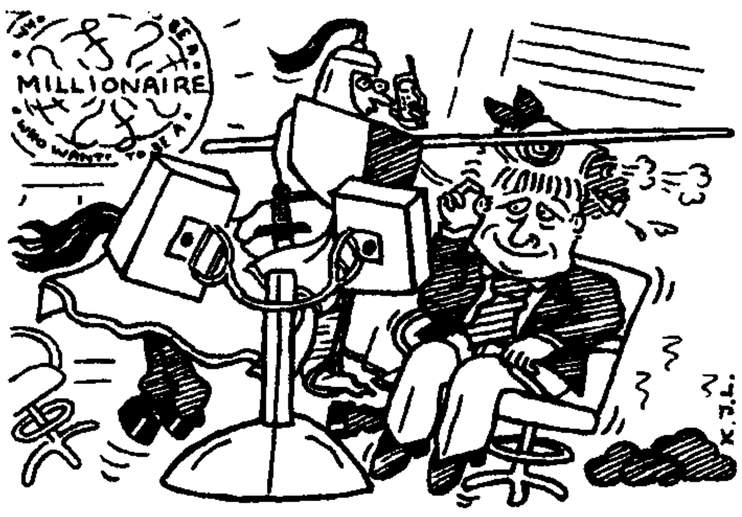
MADONNA
Radio One

Mike Tonkin and Anna Liu of Tonkin Architects have delivered a kind of naked modernism in suburbia: in such a house, human behaviour becomes fully exposed in a luminous tabula rasa in which one imagines Bergmanesque scenes of deep monochrome quietude intercut with sudden primal excesses of jagged colour. Nature may abhor vacuums, but in House 1a, one wonders if vacuums abhor nature.

JAY MERRICK
Independent

THE IRRESTIBLE RISE OF HARRY POTTER
Kid-Lit in a Globalised World
Andrew Blake
Harry Potter is an orphan, oppressed and abused by the adults around him, who retreats into a fantasy world. But ironically, as Andrew Blake makes clear, J.K. Rowling rescues her character through the reinvention of that apex of class privilege, the English public school, a literary conceit that problematises Harry Potter's status as a role model and raises important social questions about the state of Blair's Britain.

Publisher's catalogue



WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?:
The quiz as quest
Dr Martin Roiser and David Stevens
Dr Martin Roiser and David Stevens will discuss the conclusions of their recent research on the famous quiz show as they argue that the contestant plays the role of a heroic adventurer of ancient mythology whilst Chris Tarrant plays the messenger of the gods.

Advertisement for 'The Lord Paul Lectures', Thames Valley University

I wish Ally McBeal and other shows could be there [in Afghanistan] to show them what the real world is like.

***Ally McBeal* producer ALICE WEST. AFP wire report between the White House and Hollywood**

Pseuds Corporate

As well as being a partner in the Media and Communications department, Marcus Rutherford is also an artist and illustrator. This card is in the style of a recent series of drawings on which he is currently working, which draw on a narrative tradition to create a highly charged visual experience. Although all the drawings have an underlying basic structure, the conscious and subconscious references within them have something in common with the "automatic" drawings of the Surrealists and are intended to create different levels of meaning. Animated by strange mythic beasts and weird people, the story and its themes are for the viewer to discover for himself. The card is more literal than most of the other drawings in the series, and D.J. Freeman and seasonal references abound, but there are deeper layers where colours and textures shape references to art, music, literature, life and, of course, law.

Enclosed with Christmas card from law firm DJ Freeman

CONTRIBUTORS: Brendan O'Byrne, Hugo Rodger-Brown, Lord Gnome, Daniel Dodd, Imogen Wall, Alan Latchley.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

BARRIER GRIEF

THE conviction of Gary Hart for causing the deaths of 10 people when his Land Rover fell on to a railway line at Great Heck by the M62 and was hit by a train caused a lot of prurient jeering in the media and self-congratulation by police and prosecuting authorities in Yorkshire.

Mr Hart, who pleaded not guilty and consistently denied that he had fallen asleep at the wheel, is now awaiting sentence. But perhaps it is time for someone in authority to ask whether anyone else was responsible for the crash.

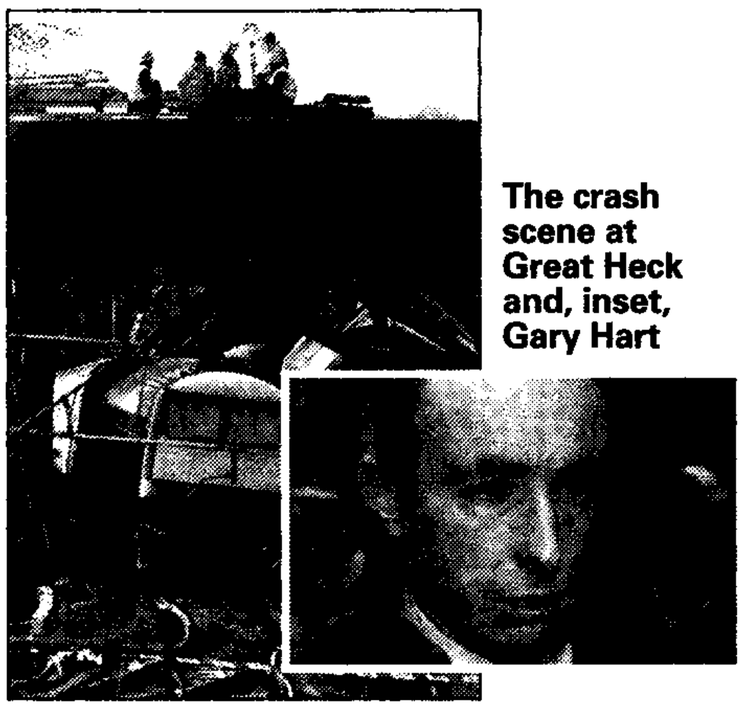
How, after all, was it possible for a Land Rover and trailer to career off an unprotected motorway and slither down an extremely steep embankment on to one of the country's busiest railway lines? This rather crucial question got little or no attention during Gary Hart's trial, even though incontrovertible evidence from official documents suggests that the highways and railways authorities were every bit as responsible for the crash as Mr Hart could ever have been.

As long ago as 1985 the department of transport's highways and traffic directorate issued a standards document entitled "safety fences and barriers". The document set out what it called "the requirements for safety fences on new and existing trunk roads". A section entitled "criteria for provision of safety fences and barriers" insisted: "Safety fences shall be installed on all new trunk roads where speeds of 50mph are allowed."

A sub-section on verges demanded that safety barriers should be installed on embankments six metres in height or "on other embankments where there is a road, railway, water hazard or other feature (eg a subway entrance) at or near the foot of the slope." The provision makes it absolutely clear that embankments leading down to a railway must be protected by a barrier.

In February 2001, 16 years after the document was issued, Gary Hart's Land Rover left the M62 motorway at a place where it was completely unprotected by a barrier, and slid directly down the very steep embankment, three metres high, straight on to the railway line.

The importance of installing barriers on such roads was underlined again in 1998 by the highly-regarded Transport Research Laboratory. The author of a special report for the Highways



The crash scene at Great Heck and, inset, Gary Hart

Agency was Janet Kennedy. "The need to protect embankments," she wrote, "depends on their height and slope. In the UK, embankments of height 6m or more warrant protection, as do those where there is a road, railway, water hazard or other feature at or near the foot of the slope."

She then defined the gradient of a slope where a safety barrier is justified. "The critical gradient lies between 1 in 2.5 and 1 in 3." The gradient of the slope at Great Heck was 1 in 2.5. She repeated this point in her conclusions: "There is an economic case for protecting embankments from which vehicles cannot recover and would be likely to lead to an injury accident... On balance, embankments of height greater than 3m should be protected, depending on the side slope."

Given the excessively steep and irrecoverable slope down which Gary Hart plunged, there can be no doubt that the Great Heck embankment fell into this category. No doubt either that as a result a most horrific accident occurred. No doubt either about the economic case for such a barrier, given the £1.4bn the Great Heck crash is expected to cost. Yet neither Janet Kennedy nor anyone from the Transport Research Laboratory gave evidence at the trial as to why the embankment was not protected by a barrier when the expert evidence and the British standard demanded that it should have been. The evidence of the representative from the Highways Agency was restricted almost exclusively to the skid-resistant properties of the M62 surface.

In the wake of the Great Heck disaster in February, the *Northern Echo*, a local daily paper with a decent record for investigative journalism, carried out an inquiry into the safety of railway bridges in the north-east. The paper uncovered a shocking state of disrepair in no fewer than 50 bridges over the East Coast main line. On 14 December, after Gary Hart's conviction, the *Echo* revealed that "only a handful of the bridges have seen any improvements in the months since", and it concluded that "the lessons of Selby have not been learnt".

On 17 December Ian Clark of Hartlepool wrote to the *Eye* about a recent journey along the M62. "As the crash site is approached, there is only a short barrier straddling the bridge parapet itself". In other words, "anyone travelling at speed along the M62 could veer off the motorway for whatever reason in exactly the same manner as Gary Hart without any chance of stopping before coming to rest on the railway track below."

Though huge gabions of rocks and waste have been shoved beside the railway track to intercept (and probably smash to pieces) any further vehicle that leaves the motorway, nothing has been done to protect the motorway itself with a barrier that would certainly have ensured that the Great Heck disaster never happened. The cost of the gabions was £13,000. The cost of a barrier covering the entire gap in the motorway through which Gary Hart plunged has been estimated at £18,000.

CLAMPDOWN ON THE COLLEGE LECHER-ERS

A FORMER student of journalism at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside has been awarded £7,500 in criminal injuries compensation after accusing one of her lecturers of raping her, even though he was found not guilty at a trial in October 2000.

After his acquittal it emerged that Russell Griffiths had two previous criminal convictions relating to former relationships with women, which he had failed to declare when he was interviewed and accepted for the post of tutor on the university's journalism course in 1998. These convictions in 1995 and 1996 included death threats, sending obscene material through the post and criminal damage. Griffiths subsequently pleaded guilty to and was imprisoned for six months for obtaining pecuniary advantage by deception. The case has led to calls for a change in the law to allow universities to check the complete police records of job applicants – a course already open to those employing teachers and other professionals working with under-18s.

In her claim to the criminal injuries compensation authority the girl, who was then 18, teetotal and did not believe in sex before marriage, described the evening of the alleged rape in May 1999 when she attended the launch party of the university radio station. "Griffiths was one of my lecturers and was present at the launch," she wrote. "He bought me a soft drink later in the evening and shortly after that he made sexual advances towards me and tried to kiss me."

She recorded that she had begun to suffer from a severe headache and decided to leave, at which point Griffiths offered to walk her home. She said that she refused and went to phone for a taxi, but passed out on the pavement before reaching the phone box. "I recall walking with him through a part of town that I was not familiar with. The next thing I remember was finding myself in the living room. I must have blacked out again and the next thing I remember was him lying on top of me and he was raping me."

During the trial the prosecution claimed that Griffiths had drugged the girl's drink before taking her to his home and raping her. After his acquittal it emerged that Griffiths had kept a journal in which he recorded over 90 sexual conquests, of which the student in question was number 84, awarding marks out of ten for performance in various categories. The jury had not been told about this list for fear that it would prove "overwhelmingly prejudicial".

Following the criminal injuries compensation, freelance journalist and a former fellow student of the girl, Stuart Goodacre, submitted a detailed complaint to the Lincolnshire CPS on her behalf regarding its handling of the matter. Goodacre believes the prosecution failed to investigate properly the sedative Zimovane with which Griffiths was said to have drugged the girl. Goodacre also complains of a lack of communication between the complainant and her prosecuting counsel and of the fact that her caseworker went on leave during the trial. The CPS denies that the girl's barrister failed to communicate with her and states: "It was unfortunate that the caseworker, who had a good relationship with the complainant, was on leave at the time of the trial."

In the wake of the incident the university claims to have strengthened its checks on prospective lecturers — it now conducts telephone inquiries instead of relying on letters alone. Deborah Wilson, a former colleague of Griffiths who still teaches journalism at the university, has set up a pressure group, CAMPUS (CAMpaign for the Protection of University Students).

In March the Labour MP for Lincoln, Gillian Merron, called on the home office to ensure that following the introduction of the criminal records bureau "disclosure" service – a one-stop shop for employers to check job candidates against police records and lists of unsuitable applicants drawn up by the government's health and education departments, which is due to be up and running by summer 2002 – universities are provided with guidance to ensure they conduct the fullest possible search for previous criminal convictions. She referred at length to the Griffiths case: "I am sure that the House would agree, knowing what we now know, that Griffiths would not have been a suitable person to appoint to the trusted post of lecturer, a job that is performed with much professionalism and skill in universities and colleges across the country. It is important that we record our trust in the overwhelming majority of lecturers who do a first-rate job on our behalf. However, such a case must not be allowed to happen again."

Merron went one stage further and suggested that university lecturers, like teachers and other professionals working with under-18s, should be exempted from the rehabilitation of offenders act 1974, giving prospective employers access to spent as well as unspent convictions. The home office minister Mike O'Brien promised a review of the categories of workers who come under the act. The review is still in progress, but the home office expects to announce the outcome to parliament shortly.

CHEQUE MATES

***EYE* readers need no introduction to the dodgy chess impresario and writer Raymond Keene, aka "the Penguin" – so called because of his uncanny resemblance to Batman's waddling, bow-tied adversary.**

Next month they will have the chance to see him in the all-too-solid flesh when he testifies at an employment tribunal in London, and the Penguin's habitual smirk may be looking a bit frayed by the time he leaves the witness-box. He has been called as a witness by Suzanne Martin, who claims that she was wrongfully dismissed as chief executive of Keene's company Brain Games Network plc after querying several of what appeared to her to be fraudulent transactions.

Another witness who faces a severe grilling is the former Tory party chairman Sir Jeremy Hanley, chairman of Brain Games since March 2000, who will be asked why he apparently did nothing to prevent this.

Brain Games, which promotes chess tournaments – including last year's unofficial world championship match in London between Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik – attracted £3m in investment when it was launched in the spring of 2000. Within weeks it had spent £220,000 buying "the entire share capital" of three companies from its own games director, Ray Keene, and a Swiss finance company, Giloberg Finance Ltd.

Keene, who is the chess columnist for the *Sunday Times*, *Times* and *Spectator*, is not only a director but a shareholder in Brain Games. Another Brain Games director during its first year of trading, Alan Lubin, who lives in Mayfair, is said in the company's accounts to have a "material interest" in Giloberg Finance Ltd. The phrase "the entire share capital", used in the Brain Games accounts, seems to suggest significant value in the three companies purchased. Yet none of them – Praetor Ltd, Brain Games Ltd or Chess Associates Ltd – had ever traded. Praetor Ltd was incorporated on 7 December 1999, only weeks before it was sold to Brain Games, and had a total value (capital and reserves) of £1,000. Similarly, Brain Games Ltd was incorporated on 7 December 1999, and also had a total value of £1,000. Chess Associates Ltd was created on 23 March 2000 by changing the name of a company called Havendisc Ltd, which was incorporated on 7 September 1998 but had been dormant ever since. Its total value was £300. Yet Keene and Giloberg somehow extracted "a total consideration of £220,000" from Brain Games for the sale.

Another curious deal is described in the Brain Games accounts as the purchase of "domains and a website for a total consideration of £290,000". The site is www.internetchess.com and was offered for sale by Chess & Bridge Ltd, a London company of excellent reputation that owns two magazines and a successful games shop in the Euston Road. Chess & Bridge sold the website, together with two domain names, on 5 May 2000 – not to Brain Games, as they had been led to believe throughout the negotiations, but to Lubin's company Giloberg. The price was $100,000 (about £60,000 at the time). Before signing the contract with Chess & Bridge, however, Giloberg had already arranged to sell on the site to Brain Games for the absurdly inflated price of £290,000. By organising the sale in two stages, Giloberg made an instant profit of about £230,000 – again at the expense of Brain Games' investors.

Ray 'Penguin' Keene

In addition to all this, Lubin's company was paid a "consultancy fee" of £151,000 within a few days of the £3m investment reaching Brain Games' bank account. Ray Keene received a fee of £50,000. Did the investors know when they put up their money that Keene and Giloberg would get these payments immediately afterwards? It seems unlikely, since neither of the fees was mentioned in the private placement memorandum – the document put out by Brain Games to attract financial backers.

Sir Jeremy Hanley, an old friend of the Penguin, was appointed chairman of Brain Games in March 2000, a few days before the payments to Keene and Giloberg, weeks before the purchase of Chess Associates Ltd and two months before the website deal – none of which had been sanctioned by the shareholders. Yet he seems not to have queried why the company was shelling out all this money. (Last week, on 18 December, Brain Games held an "extraordinary general meeting" to retrospectively "ratify" the transactions, a mere 18 months after the event.)

Only one person dared to challenge Keene's unusual business methods. Suzanne Martin, who became chief executive in July 2000, found some documents later that year which led her to wonder what the hell was going on. At a board meeting on 31 January 2001 she queried a "black hole in the accounts" and said she no longer knew whom to trust. "Trust Ray!" Sir Jeremy Hanley replied blithely. Though he admitted there was "little doubt that Alan [Lubin] has been using money creatively", he stressed the need for secrecy. "We might get done for negligence, and not be able to be directors of any other company." A week later, Suzanne Martin was summarily dismissed. Brain Games then obtained a court order compelling her to return any company documents in her possession.

Brain Games now plans to change its status from a plc to a private limited company, to hive off what assets it has into an Asian offshoot, and to "reverse" into the Einstein Group plc. Meanwhile the company is being pursued, not only by Suzanne Martin but by several angry creditors. The London club Home House was awarded judgment against Brain Games at Central London county court on 25 October over the non-payment of £31,085 owed for the opening and closing parties of the Kasparov-Kramnik match last year. Also in hot pursuit is Apco Asia Ltd, a Hong Kong firm which was involved in Brain Games' "sponsorship" of a major Chinese chess tournament last June. Apco Asia is pressing for payment of invoices going back more than one year and totalling $92,945 (about £64,000).

With pressure mounting on all sides, it remains to be seen if Messrs Keene and Hanley enjoy a prosperous new year. Although a press release issued by Einstein Group on 22 November claims that Brain Games "owns the global rights to the World Chess Championships", the rights in fact belong to the international chess federation, FIDE. The current FIDE champion, Vishy Anand, has indicated that he will not play in any "world championship" organised outside the federation. And Garry Kasparov, who appeared in Keene's London match last year, is reluctant to repeat the experience.

"Braingames is not too solid financially," he told a Russian interviewer recently. "I won't go into the London match contract's details, but I will just say that Braingames had a legal possibility of 'hooking' me: If I had been paid a certain amount of money last year in November, I would now be obliged to participate… But that didn't happen. Obviously, Braingames has never had any money in its bank account." He added that if next year's contest between Kramnik and the chess computer Deep Fritz "does not prove super-successful, Braingames will go bankrupt, I think. For the time being, if this company suggests that I take part in this or that tournament, it should prove that it has enough financial resources."

MINING COMPENSATION SCAM

POINTING THE WHITE FINGER

AFTER a brief interlude following the winding down of Operation Danum into the Donnygate corruption scandal (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*), Inspector Knacker is busy again in Doncaster – this time at the fraud squad.

A year ago the *Eye* broke the story of how thousands of sick and dying former miners seeking compensation for industrial diseases such as vibration white finger and emphysema were being ripped off by a private company called the Yorkshire Compensation Recovery Service (YCRS) – (*see* issues 1017 and 1020).

Many of the victims were under the mistaken impression their claims were being handled by the National Union of Mineworkers. In fact YCRS was a private business run by discredited NUM Colliery Officers Staff Association (COSA) official and Doncaster Labour Party chairman Dave Murdoch and his family. Attention was drawn to the scam when DSS officials started sending inadequately prepared claims back to the NUM, which found to its horror that its paid official, Murdoch, had discovered a profitable sideline from his day job. YCRS was charging for a service the union would have provided free, creaming off administration charges which dramatically reduced miners' compensation pay-outs.

The miners' distress was further aggravated when it was discovered that many claims had been settled for sums well below what might have been considered reasonable with better representation. YCRS, surprise surprise, had close links with Doncaster council.

The *Eye*'s story appeared shortly after the council acquired a new chief executive, David Marlow, a man untainted by the scandals of the past. He commissioned an inquiry team, headed by housing ombudsman Roger Jefferies, to investigate the new scandal. Its 86-page report is now on Marlow's desk. It outlines a familiar tale of Labour party cronyism, bullying and corruption. It confirms that an application to the council for £100,000 start-up money [£60,000 was paid] was based on false information as to the legal status of YCRS; that no attempt was made to keep track of the grant, nor were any accounts submitted by the company to indicate how the grant might have benefited the victims of industrial diseases.

The impression of many of the aged miners that YCRS was an NUM operation arose from the fact that it was run from COSA's headquarters at 11 Chequer Road, Doncaster. Jefferies details how COSA bought 11 Chequer Road from the council in March 1988 at a knock-down price of £28,000, further reduced by a council relocation grant of £8,700, then flogged it back again for a generous £67,500 in 1994. COSA remained in occupation while a rent was negotiated.

A letter to the then council leader Peter Welsh from Murdoch dated 8 February 1995 argued that the proposed rental figure was too high: "I know comrade they say nothing is free in this world. Now is your chance to prove them wrong." The letter was signed: "Yours in the struggle." Jefferies found an appended handwritten note signed by Welsh: "Can I suggest that no rental be charged?" Murdoch duly won his rent-free deal for three years from 1995, but in fact paid nothing until January 2001, due to an "administrative oversight" on the part of the council.

Disappointingly, the Jefferies report states: "The team decided at the outset that it was not appropriate to probe the conduct of YCRS as a service." Fortunately Inspector Knacker has no such inhibition.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE Windsors appear to have an endless talent to choose the wrong friends or associates when it comes to money. If it isn't Charles hawking Highgrove as a venue and Camilla as a hostess for any foreign company or millionaire prepared to make donations to his charities, it is the greedy Edward and Sophie lining up to take money on the "royals for sale" circuit. Now it seems brother Andrew has also fallen among dubious company in his penchant for a good time.

Andrew used London PR man Michael Wynne-Parker, known as "the man with the golden address book", to raise money for young opera singer Summer Watson. Wynne-Parker helped organise a trust last year which raised money from a private lunch and dinners at which Andrew was the guest of honour so that donors could buy the bragging rights to a royal.

How the dim-witted prince could be allowed anywhere near Wynne-Parker is hard to imagine. Even more remarkable is the claim that the loyal and vocal monarchist is a confidant of Prince Philip. For Michael Wynne-Parker is nothing if not bad news for anyone who has had the misfortune to do business with him.

A self-proclaimed faith healer in the 1970s (the "Reverend Michael" ran the Foundation for the Wholeness of Man), Wynne-Parker then discovered the world of finance. That was until 1990 when his one man Norwich firm Wynne-Parker Financial Management was shut down by the regulator FIMBRA and fined £10,000 after admitting 12 charges of misconduct.

By then Wynne-Parker was mixing in royal circles and prominent in the English Speaking Union. He launched a PR consultancy Introcom with his old friend Lord Moyne, the former Jonathan Guinness. That connection was to lead both men into a series of business failures and official investigations.

The first was Tajik Air which in 1993 launched an air service to the central Asian republic. Not for long. The company folded the following year owing £3m despite promises from Wynne-Parker that the Tajikistan government was behind the airline. Wynne-Parker gave a private dinner party for the Tajik prime minister in 1994 attended by Lady Thatcher. The company crashed a month later.

Then there was Access to Justice, a charity established in 1995 to provide legal services to those who believed they were victims of injustice. The real beneficiaries were Wynne-Parker, Moyne and other directors, together with convicted fraudsman David Mahady, hired to run the charity while disqualified from being a director. Mahady also ran an unlicensed "bank", Delt Securities, which lent £100,000 to Wynne-Parker before it was closed by the DTI in 1997.

The Department of Timidity & Inaction, which moved to wind up Access to Justice in 1997, accused Wynne-Parker of paying himself £5,000 for loss of office when he quit as a director but not repaying the money when he reappointed himself a month later. There were other abuses of back pay and expenses by directors who were accused of "unjustified financial benefits". Introcom was hired to raise money for the charity but was paid more than it raised. Access to Justice crashed owing more than £750,000.

In March 2000 Wynne-Parker and Moyne together with two other Access to Justice directors were disqualified from being directors for five years by the DTI. Undeterred Prince Andrew was soon drawing on the "unfit" PR man's social and business contacts.

But Wynne-Parker and Moyne's biggest score was Trustor, the Swedish company looted of £50m after it was taken over in 1997 by the peer and his Swedish associates with its own money. It was

"What are you doing here? You've been made redundant – didn't you get the letter...?"

Wynne-Parker who introduced Moyne to Introcom client Peter Mattsson who with fellow Swedes Thomas Jisander and the chief crook Joachim Posener executed the fraud.

Wynne-Parker knew Mattsson from his days at foreign exchange broker Effex International, run by another client, Norwegian Birger Ostraat. The PR man introduced Mattsson and Ostraat to Prince Charles. Effex crashed in 1995 owing British and Scandinavian investors £17m. Ostraat was jailed for seven years.

Once Moyne and pals were in charge of the Trustor cheque book money was soon heading their way. Wynne-Parker did not miss out. Introcom was paid sizeable fees. Last June Mattsson and Jisander were jailed for their part in the fraud. Moyne was acquitted. Posener is a fugitive believed to be in Israel. Wynne-Parker was not charged.

By 1999 the well connected Wynne-Parker had moved on to a new sideline – selling honorary consulships for Sierra Leone.

The man with the golden address book is now being sued for repayment of a £36,000 loan by the trustees for Moyne, bankrupted last year to the tune of £40m due to the Trustor scandal.

All of which is no doubt what Michael Wynne-Parker had in mind when he wrote in defence of the royals to the *Sunday Times* last month declaring : "Moral influence and good living are, thank God, compatible."

THE demise of *Sunday Business* is another triumph for the deadly duo of Andrew "Brillo" Neill and loyal lapdog Ian Watson. Since failing on Murdoch US Fox channel, "Brillo" has presided over the loss of probably more than £50m by the brothers Barclay in a succession of failed or struggling newspapers starting with the *European* through the *Scotsman* to the now closed *Sunday Business*.

All the Barclays have obtained thanks to Neill is their knighthoods. But whether that will be enough to keep "Brillo" on the Barclay payroll when his current agreement expires next year is open to question. The younger Barclays, who appear to have forced the exit from *Sunday Business*, seem less impressed. They may not want to continue to support the latest Neill journalistic brilliance – a Sunday and Monday only rival to the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* called, er, *The Business* and based on the irresistible attractions of the Press Association wire – even with the PA as a partner.

Watson has never met a rich man he did not like. When deputy editor at the *Sunday Telegraph* he cosied up to the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed and was rewarded by being a guest at his Scottish castle.

At the *European* he happily worked for Cap'n Bob, whom the *Torygraph* had never seen as a fat crook. He revealed his erudition by announcing that when "Bob" asked him to edit the *European* and its dire magazine *Élan* he didn't know what the title meant. He was sidelined by Maxwell in 1991 for failing to have sufficient of that magical quality to save the paper.

Watson next joined the burgeoning business empire of David Elias in 1993 as editor-in-chief and director of such titles as investment analysis magazine *Breaking the Mould* and the Egon Ronay restaurant and hotel guide. Elias was broken by his ill-fated venture with pornographer Richard Desmond in his pre-*Express* days, who sued his companies for £97m. The Ronay guide ran into problems in 1997 when the inspectors were not paid. *Breaking the Mould*, now renamed *Choicearrive*, went into liquidation in 1996. Elias disappeared to Singapore. Watson reappeared at the *Scotsman* as business editor.

The ever useful Watson – now apparently using the tartan affectation of Iain – was despatched from the *Scotsman* as the undertaker to oversee the near 50 sackings at *Sunday Business* while joint editor Richard Northedge pondered whether taking a 20 percent cut in his £115,000 salary was worth staying on. The Watson style of consultation with those listed for redundancy was to drone on about how he was a victim of Maxwell and how difficult it was owning four houses.

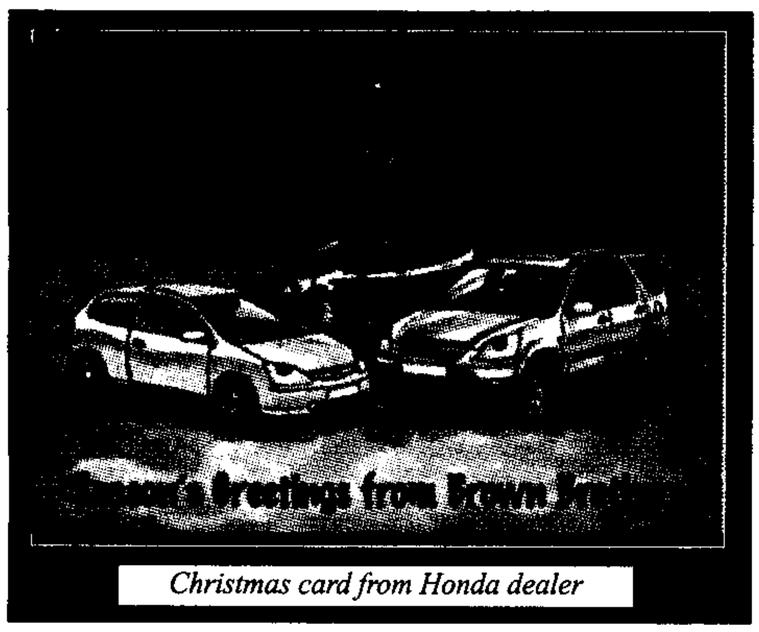
No doubt those remaining on the new Neill venture can look forward to similar sympathetic treatment when "Take in PA" fails, as seems inevitable.

THE phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed was certainly making a big profit when he valued shares in Harrods Online at $23 each for the purposes of selling them to himself at Harrods and pocketing the proceeds offshore.

Company records in Dublin show Danamon

TINNED FOODS
"WILL A COLLEAGUE FROM PRODUCE PLEASE ATTEND THE BREAD COUNTER..."
SHAREHOLDER DELEGATE MEETING
A 'COLLEAGUE'?
SINCE WHEN HAVE THEY BEEN 'COLLEAGUES'?
SINCE WE CUT THEIR WAGES AND FORCED THEM TO WORK ON A SUNDAY!
CONFERENCE FACILITY

The Spirit of Christmas



Christmas card from Honda dealer

Enterprises, a Dutch company in which Fayed has a material indirect interest, paid just $1 a share in November 1999 for a 50 percent stake in Harrods Online. A month later they were worth $23 as Fayed began a series of over-priced share deals which saw Harrods pay $8m – more than Danamon's total investment of $5m in the dot.com venture – for a 3.5 percent stake. The remaining 50 percent was issued to a Hamburg-based company OHT Direct for $5m. This would appear to be part of the German business empire controlled by the Otto family which owns Otto Versand, the world's largest mail order company and the Spiegel retail group. However, the two Otto representatives on the Harrods Online board quit in August 2000.

Ultimately Harrods paid Danamon and an associated offshore company Karimco £37m for a 25 percent interest. Harrods has since sold back its interest to Danamon after it was valued at just £4.7m. Not much more than Danamon's original investment.

ARTHUR Andersen chief executive Joseph Berardino admitted to a Congressional committee earlier this month that the accounting giant will "have to change" in the wake of the collapse of Enron, the biggest ever corporate failure. Too true for the firm that like its energy giant client relentlessly pursued "new" Labour contacts.

Andersen is likely to be hit with a legal tsunami of civil claims from Enron creditors and shareholders. These are expected to dwarf those stemming two other recent major audit failures.

Andersen paid at least $75m of a $220m settlement in 1998 for claims arising from the over-stating of assets by Waste Management to the tune of $1.4 billion. Earlier this year Andersen also settled a civil fraud case with the Securities & Exchange Commission over the Waste Management audit and was fined a record $7m.

Already in 2001 Andersen had settled for $110m a claim brought by shareholders in Sunbeam after its profits were grossly overstated under the regime of one-time Sir James Goldsmith hatchet man "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap who now faces a civil fraud case.

Perhaps now the Blair government will put some distance between it and Andersen, the firm that helped John De Lorean con a former Labour government. On the other hand, if you want people who can be trusted to do what you the client wants no matter how improper or illegal?

'Slicker'

Number crunching

£292m

■ Half-year "profit" cited by Railtrack as proof of solvency.

£337m

■ Direct government bale-out to Railtrack in same half year.

(● Source: Rail Regulator's Office.)

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "It combines the charming thrills of a Disneyland with the very worst of the Soviet Gulag prison camp," Vilniumas Malinauskas told reporters as he guided them round his amusement park in Grutas, near Vilnius. "I believe the fun-loving atmosphere demonstrates that Lithuanians have a healthy view of history, and are finally putting their tragic past behind them. And with an admission price of only two dollars, I'm convinced that StalinWorld will soon become a major tourist attraction."

Malinauskas (a sixty-year-old canned banana mogul) then pointed out some of the many features of his thirty-hectare Soviet theme park. "The tracks of our planned railway system proved too expensive, so we're building a monorail instead. When that is completed, visitors will be able to board a cattle wagon in Vilnius, and travel here crammed in like prisoners, to give them an idea of what it's like to be deported. On arrival, they will be ushered inside the barbed wire fence by actors dressed as Stalin and Lenin, and made to march around the camp while loudspeakers blare out old communist hymns. Refreshments will be available, consisting of shots of vodka, cold borscht soup in a tin bowl with stale bread and canned bananas, to be eaten on benches amid red Soviet-era propaganda posters reading 'There Is No Happier Youth in the World Than Soviet Youth!' All visitors will be constantly monitored by guards in the machine gun towers. It's so authentic that it almost makes me hanker for the old times."

But not everyone is impressed by StalinWorld. "Imagine that one day armed KGB men come to your door," complained Leonas Kerosierius on behalf of the 60,000 Lithuanian survivors of Stalinist deportations.

"They beat your neighbour, rape your sister and mother, kill your brothers, and exile your family. And now someone is building a monument to these killers? How would you feel?"

However, Malinauskas was unrepentant. "We had no rape in our family, but my own father was deported. Yet I am undeterred. In fact, I'm delighted, because the complaints are attracting more people and we hope to achieve one million visitors next year." *(The Baltic City Paper, 16/12/01. Spotter: Anon)*

— ● —

● *"The four meals were ordered by phone from a Chinese take-away in Bloxwich," Inspector Ian Grundy told reporters in Walsall. "The delivery man went out to the address given, but found it was a void property in an empty block of flats. While he was making his way back down the stairs, the meals were ripped from his grasp by the four suspects, and he was hit over the head with a bag of prawn crackers, which made his hair go white. The attackers then bolted.*

"Unfortunately for them, a portion of curry sauce had seeped out of one of the containers, and we were able to follow their trail down the stairs, across the courtyard, along the street, across the landings at Fairview Court on Western Avenue, and finally into one of the flats, where we apprehended the four suspects."

Four men from the Bentley area of Walsall were said to be helping the police with enquiries. (Walsall Express & Star, 19/11/01. Spotter: I. D. Davis)

— ● —

● "If Geyer thinks his football players are performing like whores, then he should send them here to see how hard we work," a prostitute named Vanessa told reporters in Hamburg's notorious St Pauli red-light district. "I work my bottom off between twelve and fourteen hours a day, sometimes two weeks

straight without a day off. He's not only insulted my profession, but he clearly doesn't realise that our job is a lot harder than his."

Vanessa was speaking on behalf of Hamburg's prostitute collective after soccer coach Eduard Geyer had criticised his Energie Cottbus team, complaining that "there are players whose view of performance is like the whores of St Pauli. All they do is smoke cigarettes, drink too much, and sleep around."

In her reply, she pointed out that "this is a competitive business, and we have to stay in shape. I never drink alcohol, and I stay fit through regular weight training and by eating lots of fruit. I'd be happy to put his players through the same training regime that I follow, but I doubt if they could stand the pace. I tell you, if Geyer's team were in as good condition as the whores of St Pauli, they'd be in first place in the Bundesliga, instead of almost last. The only things we have in common are that we both work near the bottom, and every time we perform, we both get fucked." *(Reuters, 16/10/01. Spotter: Julian Shea)*

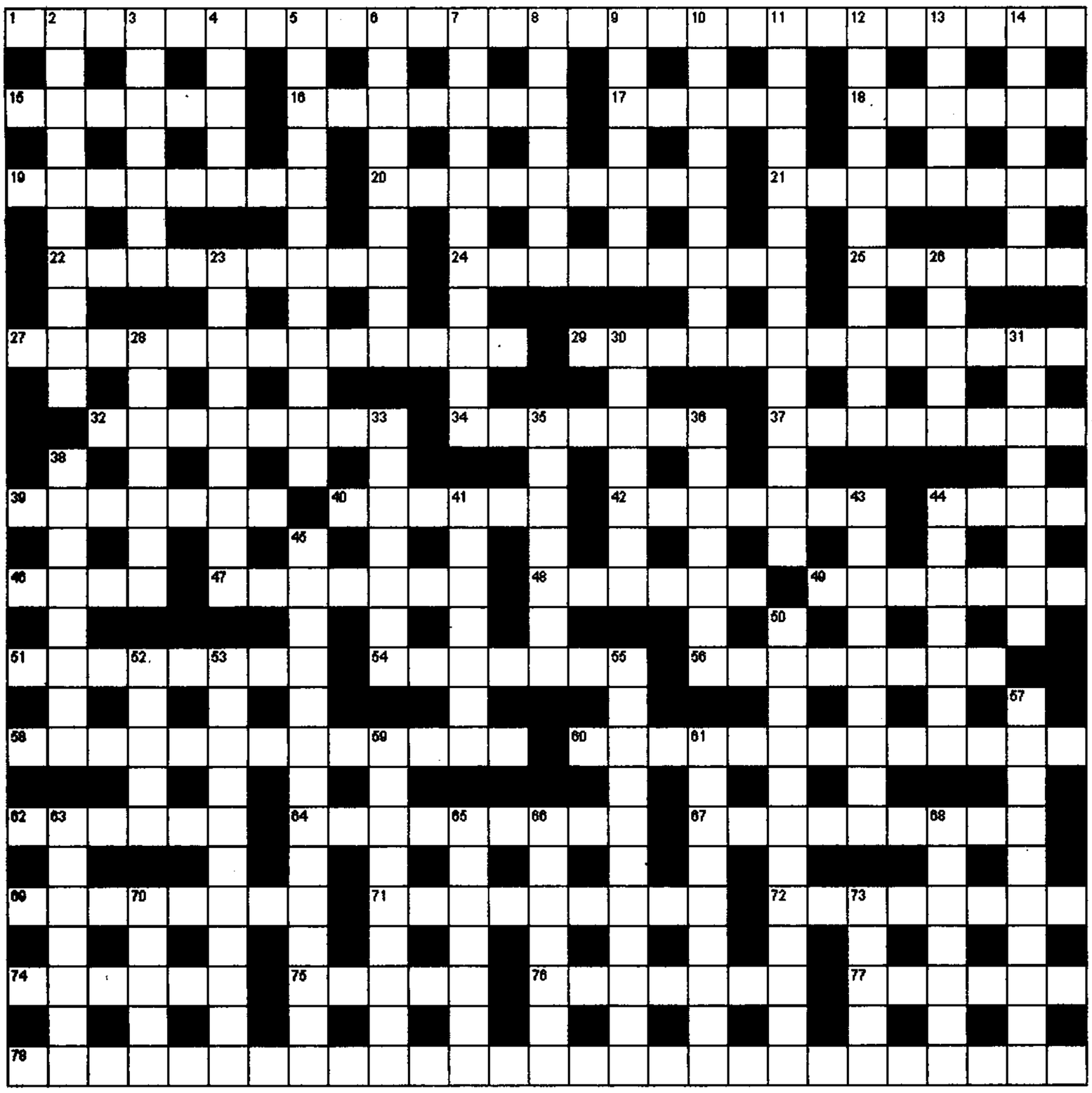
JOBS
HUSBAND
Lee Bowyer shouldn't be transferred.. no way!
He's Leeds through and through... ..in fact..
If you add 'd' and 's' to his Christian name it spells Leeds
LEEDS UNITED
I ♥ LEEDS UTD

£250 crossword puzzle on p. 30

EYE CROSSWORD 199

£250 PRIZE

by Cyclops



Unclued lights 1/29/40/78/58/60 make up (one version of) an introduction to the craft of sexual shenanigans (1,3,2,3,4,4,5,2,3,3,6,4,4,2,3,10,3,1,5,2,3,3,3,4,3,1,7,5).

Starred clues (which include no definition, just the cryptic element) lead to some of the participants in the above.

ACROSS

1/29/40/78/58/60 See Preamble
15/44* Not much time to have a shag (6,4)
16 Gay magazine? It won't do your sight much good (4-3)
17 Get rid of Bush! (5)
18 Awaiting case but not inside dodgy St. Albion, no way (2,4)
19 Embarrassed, er, getting end away on Dodge? Get on the job elsewhere (8)
20* Possibly a tender lover (9)
21 Canine's wonderful organ getting hard after horny warning (3-5)
22 Get into the habit of Friday working? (5,4)
24 Cosmetic aids to poke between cheeks (9)
25 Not all frottage is masochistic prejudice against senior figures (6)
27 Abbot penetrates dictator and *Eye* man, being of dual nationality (6-7)
29 See 1
32 Wholesome and virginal (8)
34 'Problem' art's crappy with article included from here (7)
37 Pretentious snob of daughter getting to screw around and shit (4,4)
39* Liable to get gobbled by relative killer (7)
40 See 1
42 Lance, the leading character, is ages getting screwed (7)
44 See 15
46* Bill's partner, Kelvin (4)
47 Hinged opening to member (4-3)
48 Sideways pump on one half of TV presenting duo (6)
49 Loaded pleasure-seeker wants Prince to shag – wow! (7)
51 Film star's main point (willy) is lacking point (4,4)
54 Mate of ruler could also be raising girl's top off (7)
56* Grotesque 'Cyclops' by Bacon (5,3)
58 See 1
60 See 1
62 Media frenzy about large girl (6)
64 Comedian James flipped on getting a good rush and had a fight (9)
67 Move on board makes one question Paula's crappy directions (9)
69 Singular thing between a performer's legs that motivates him (8)
71 State of local piss-artist without energy, lying in state (9)
72 Changing political allegiance in voting is a hard thing (8)
74 Habit of getting member in a twist (6)
75 Made to look old participating in secret romp (5)
76 Our Mr Blair, note, scoundrel at heart, is now to bend the other way (7)
77 Try piss-poor Nigel Dumpster's journalistic contribution (6)
78 See 1

DOWN

2 'Red Ken' perversely pisses about people taking a short break (10)
3 Fancy semen-covered turnover – I don't believe it! (5,2)
4 Bloke on getting erection becomes lumpy (5)
5 Easy-going dwarf needs energy to mount Felicity and youth (5-2-5)
6 Fringe group appears first – they amount to more than one-on-one violations (4-5)
7 Pokes Carol, roughly grabbing one's evening wear (5-6)
8 Is sick of supporters of religious arses steeped in drink (5,2)
9 "Brown's in this month" – Mo (7)
10 Topless Lewinsky's after flipping Blair according to the *Eye* – they might be seen in bed (9)
11 Bill's boner goes off to a point, right off – but a privileged position entails responsibilty (8,6)
12 We all dithered, pissed about, delayed parliamentary business (11)
13 A lout with a hygiene problem is still a lout (5)
14 Drugs ring king ditched by thieves (7)
23 Rubbing hard, holding girl's top and flagellating (9)
26 Member not large, perform badly here in Surrey (5)
28 Sister one thanks on taking end of dick, an icy protrusion (7)
30 Bush down under, not in behind (7)
31 A break from state "pussy charge" (8)
33 Drug injectors have diminishing craving – speed's out (7)
35 Graduate Mark with an Eye application (7)
36 Pleasant getting end away with Fanny on top but it could kill you (7)
38 Game? – then sleep with nothing on with Trotsky (8)
41 Bloomer – Cook on TV (7)
43 Cook and Hislop getting to act like insular tourists (6-3)
44 Is a European allowed to be a fertility symbol? (7)
45 Outstanding leader Norm linked with stomach on Brenda (8-6)
50 Utter "Nice rounded figure but as frigid as can be" (8,4)
52 Afghanistan: a Taliban home to one-time British colony (5)
53 Organ gets infectious and difficult to ignore (3-8)
55 Military men having members with a good deal of foreskin caught inside (5,6)
57 I've often screwed around in my time at the office, possibly (4,2,4)
59 Prove marriage is just a game (4,5)
61 "I am breaking with the little swine!" – said when she left her funny-man partner? (3,6)
63 One prone to have a flutter, Brenda? (7)
65 See about getting in gonad-busting car (7)
66 Magazine's on the brink – it might get pencil treatment (7)
68 Worker's Party supporter lacking leader (7)
70 Such worthless stuff is part and parcel of Murdoch affiliation (5)
73 Topless mutt, symbolic of America (5)

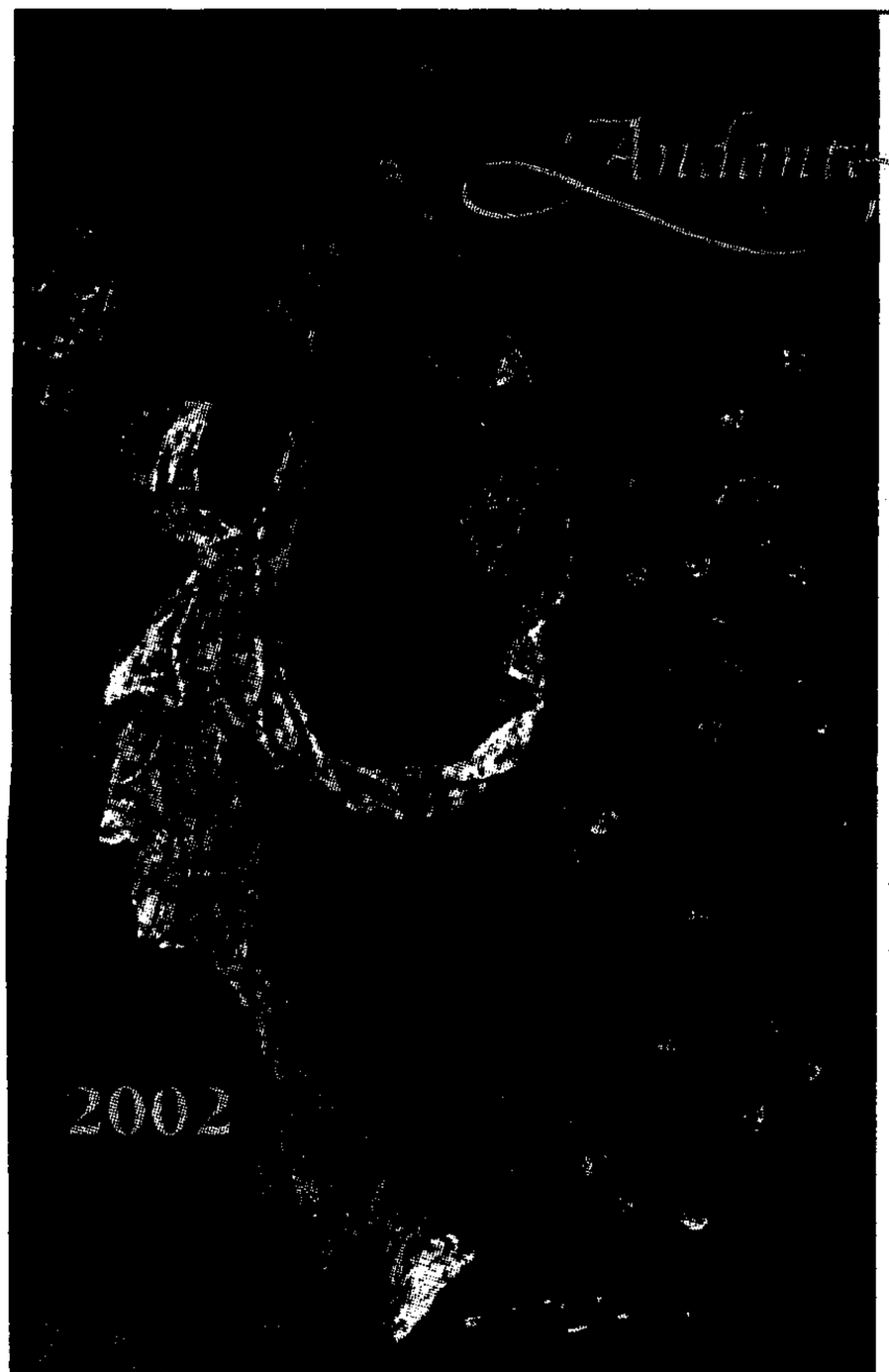
£250 prize to first solution opened on 4.1.02
Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye,
6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 198

Winner: MARY IMBER

ACROSS:1/6/22/27 Christmas comes but once a year 9 End-on 10 Lapping up 11/15 The best of friends 12 Adaptor 13 Utter 18 Sepulchre 20 Gloom 24 Bumbler 26 Club Class 28 Seles 29 Testicles.

DOWN: 1 Chestnuts 2 Red meat 3 Singe 4 Milk tooth 5 Sepia 6 Climaxing 7 Megaton 8 Super 14 Roll-necks 16 Freebases 17 Sombreros 19 Pit bull 21 Oil-well 22 Bucks 23 Enact 25 Miami.



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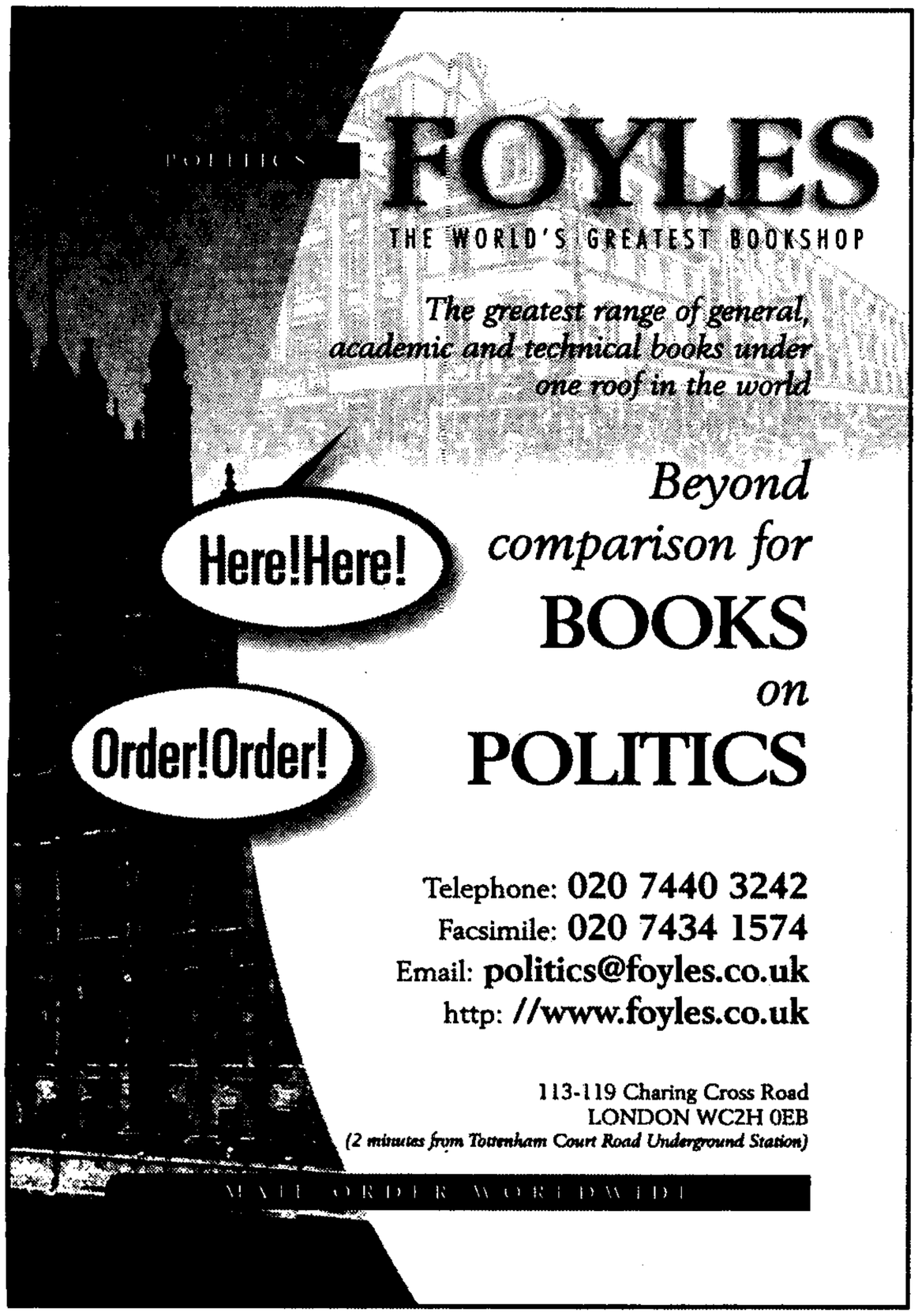
Daily Telegraph



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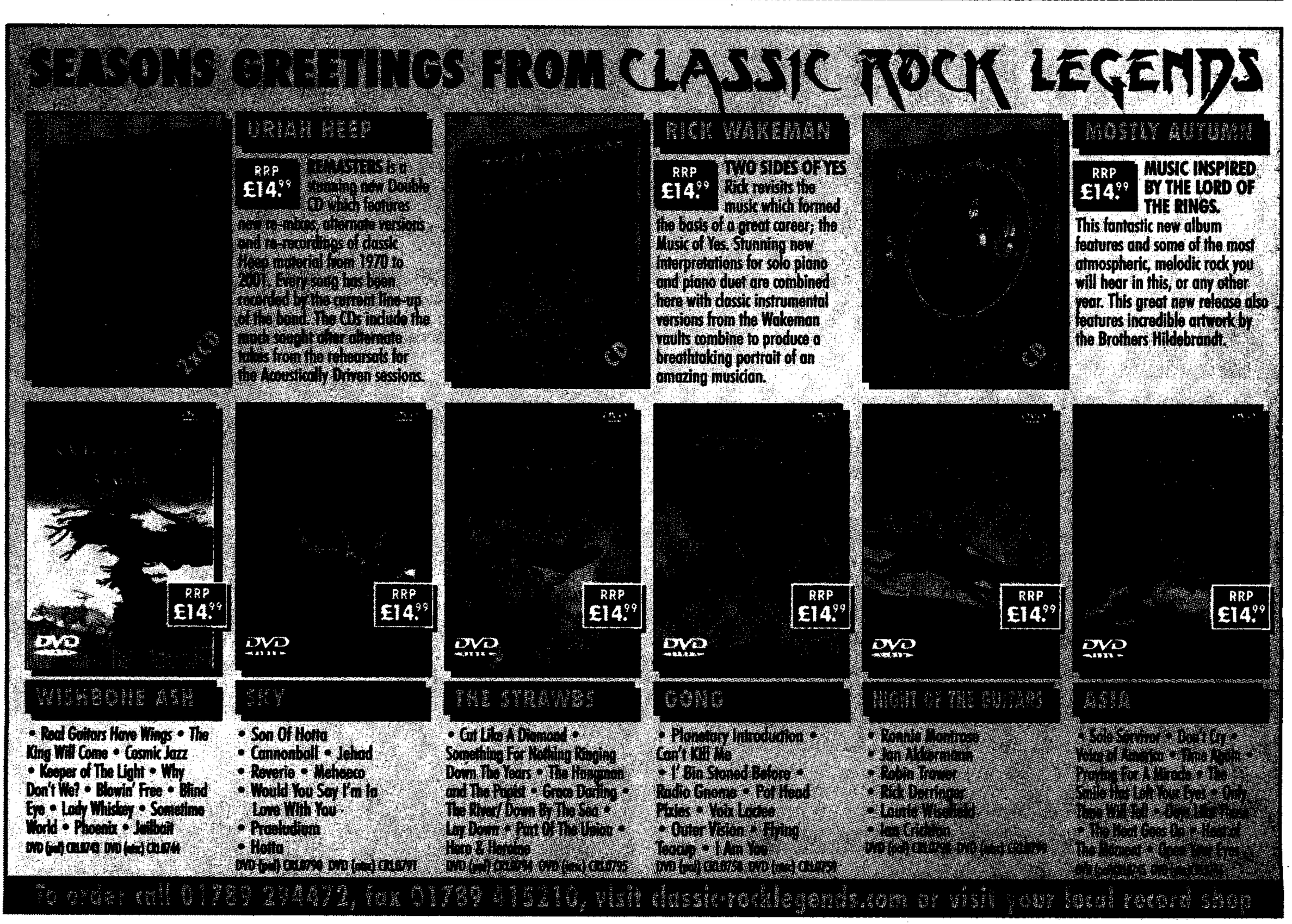
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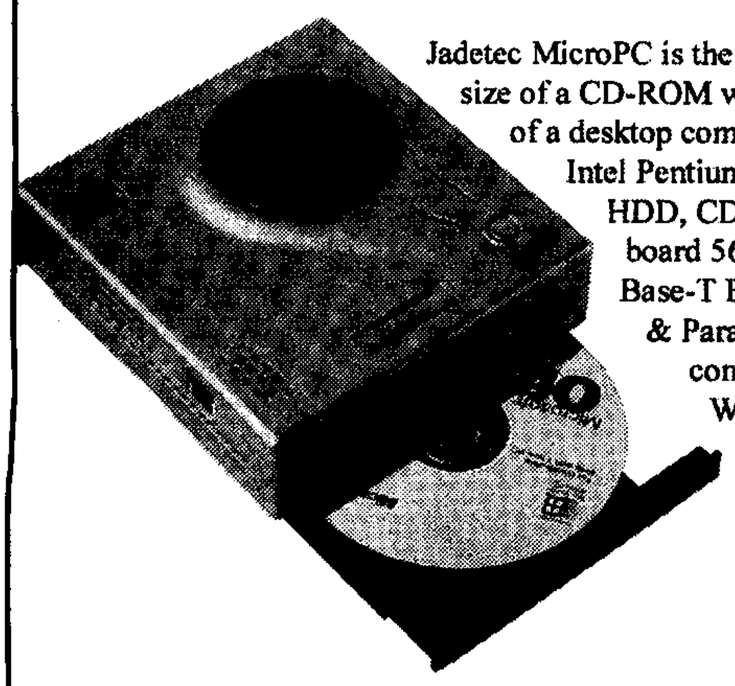

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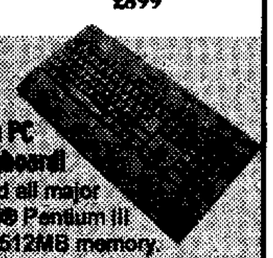

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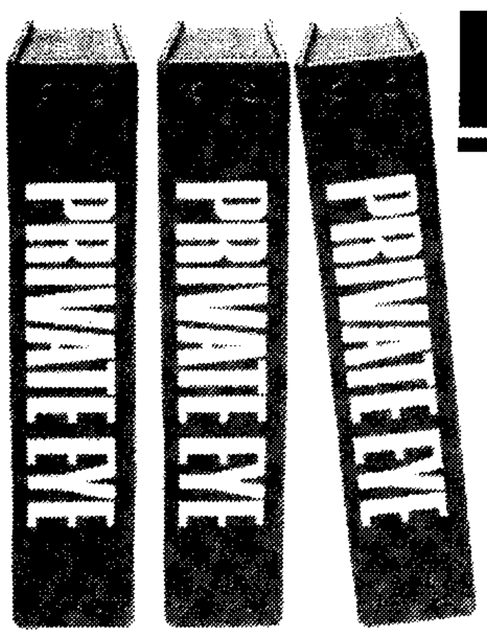

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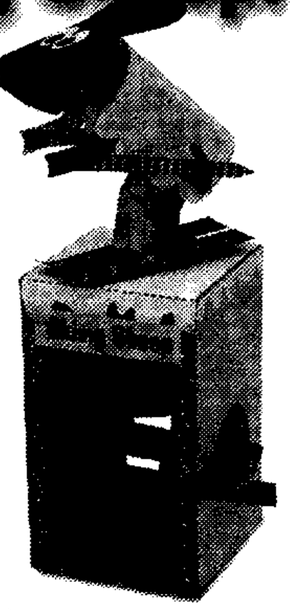

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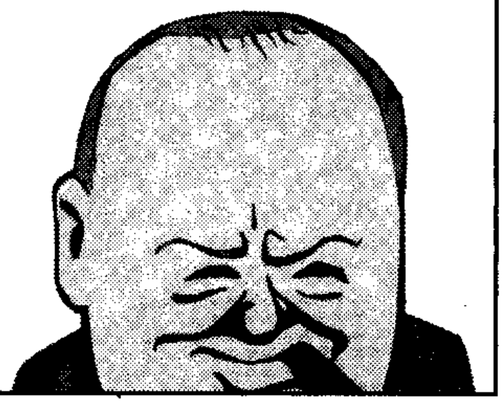

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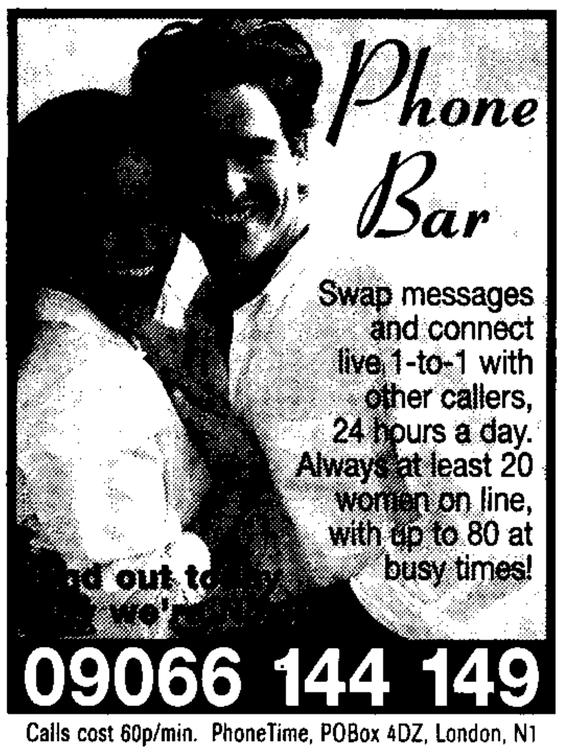
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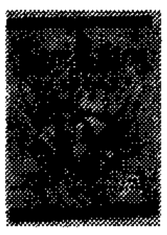

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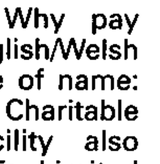

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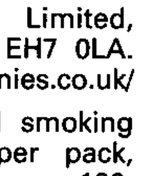

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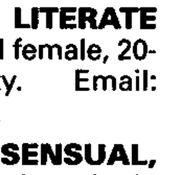

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12 Days Of Christmas	60025
Away In A Manger	60001
Come All Ye Faithful	60003
Deck The Halls	60021
First Day of Christmas	60005
God Rest You Merry	60006
Good King	60007
Hark The Herald	60009
Jingle Bells	60010
John Lennon So This Is Christmas	55126
O Come All Ye	60013
O Little Town	60012
On The First Day Of Xmas	60014
Rudolf The Red Nose	60015
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town	60016
Silent Night	60018
We wish you a Merry	60019
Wham Last Christmas	55246
While Shepherds	60017
White Christmas	60026
Winter Wonderland	60027

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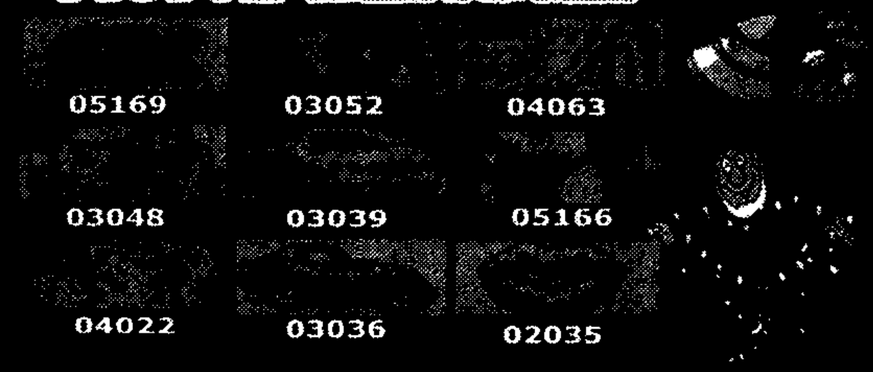

TOP 40 CHART TONES

Afroman Because I Got High 53198
Kylie Can't Get You Out Of My Head 73162
DJ Otzi Hey Baby 53203
Britney Spears I'm A Slave For You 73165
Michael Jackson You Rock My World 55284
City High What Would You Do 73161
Usher You Got It Bad 57058
Alien Ant Farm Smooth Criminal 53199
Steps Chain Reaction 73163
Mary J Blige Family Affair 53213
Elton John I Want Love 55285
Samatha Mumba Baby Come On Over 53205
Star Sailor Alcoholic 53215
Jamiroquai Little L 53188
Blue If You Come Back 53220
Shaggy Dance & Shout 53221
Charlatans The A Man Needs To Be Told 57063
Five Lets Dance 73160
Nelly Furtado Turn Off The Light 53183
Ones The Flawless 57061
Linkin Park In The End 58024
Uncle Kracker Follow Me 53193
Bell & Sperling Sven Sven Sven 54028
Sum 41 Fat Lip 53218
Liberty Thinking If Over 53217
Bob The Builder Mambo No 5 59009
Superman Lovers & Mani Hoffman Starlight 53196
Shaggy Feat Sam Cole Luv Me Luv Me 53214
N Trance Set You Free 53204
Atomic Kitten Eternal Flame 73150
Blue Too Close 53191
Eve Feat & Gwen Stefani Let Me Blow Your Mind 53187
So Solid Crew 21 Seconds 53189
Dido Hunter 53186
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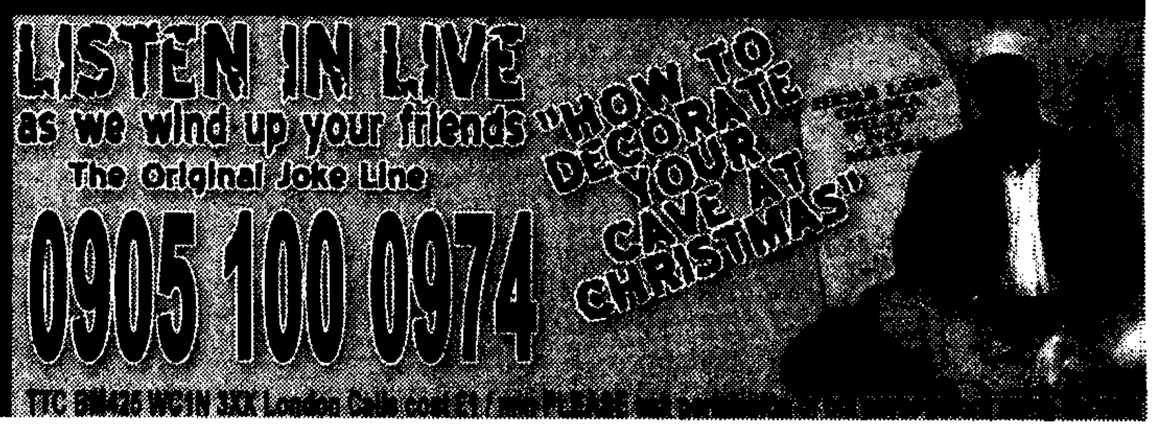

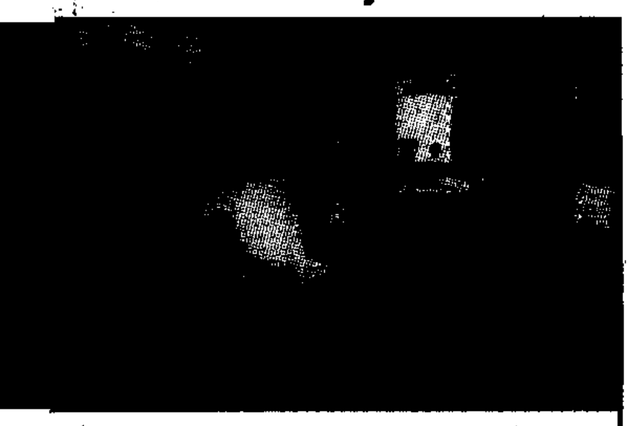

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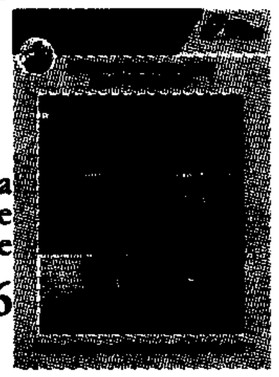

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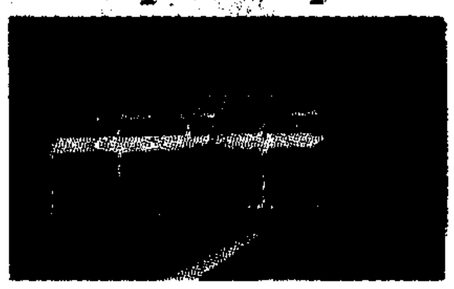

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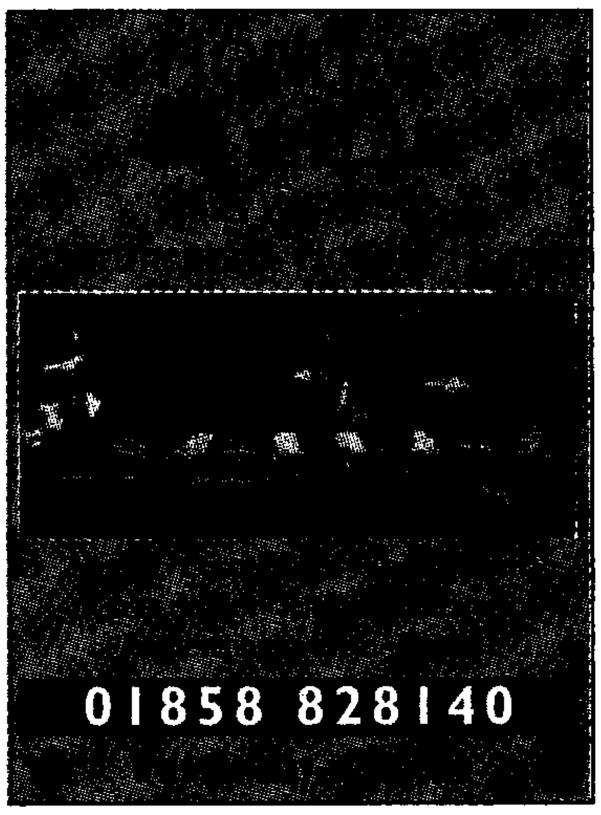

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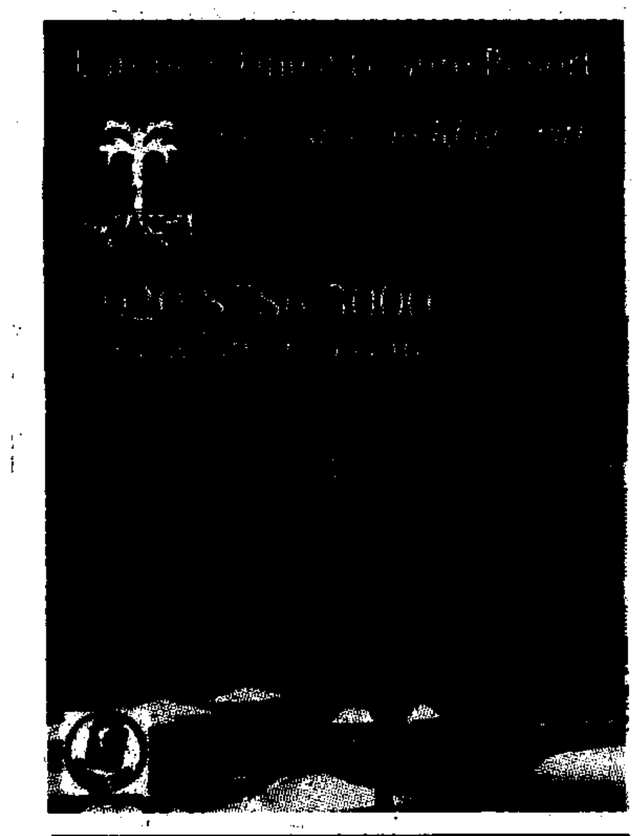

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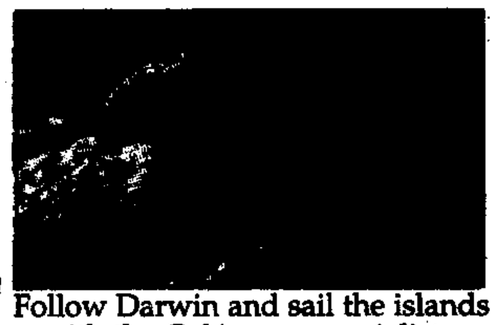

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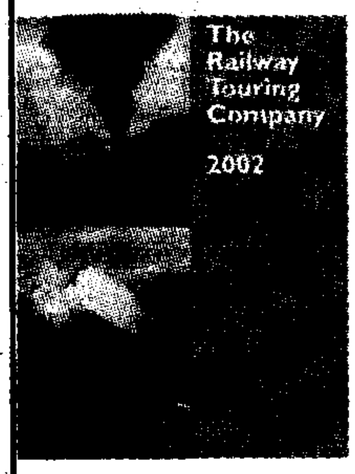

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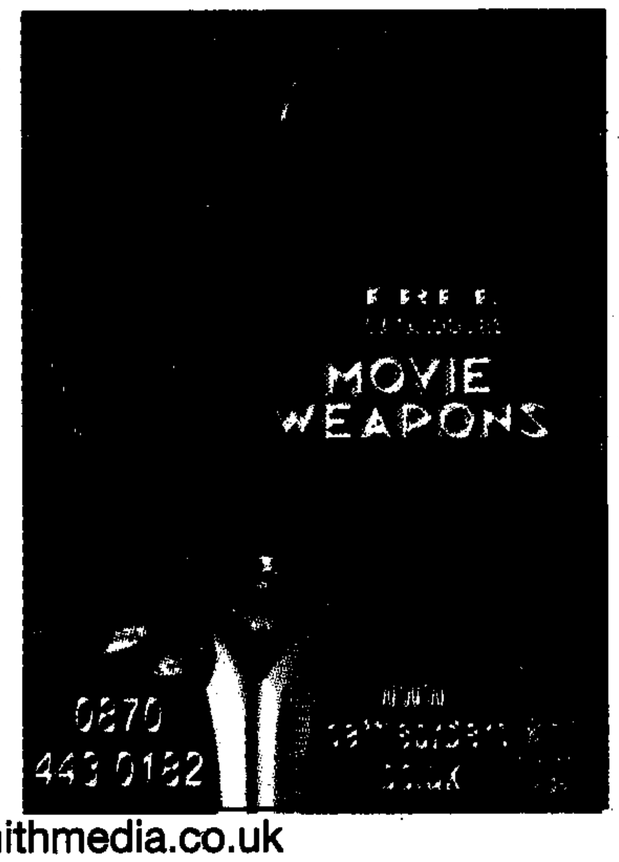

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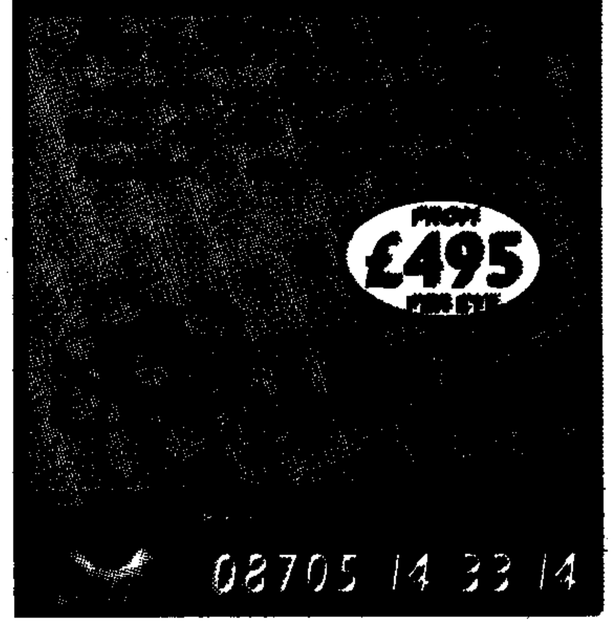

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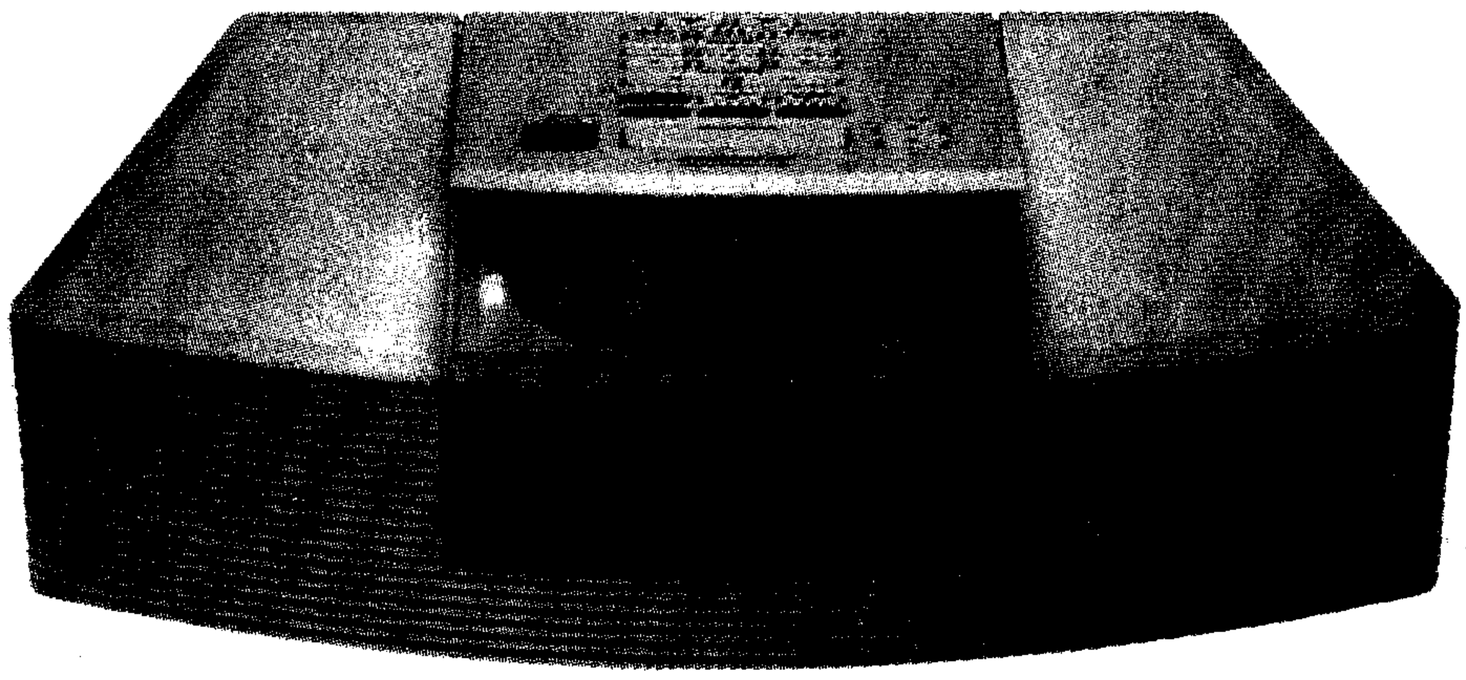

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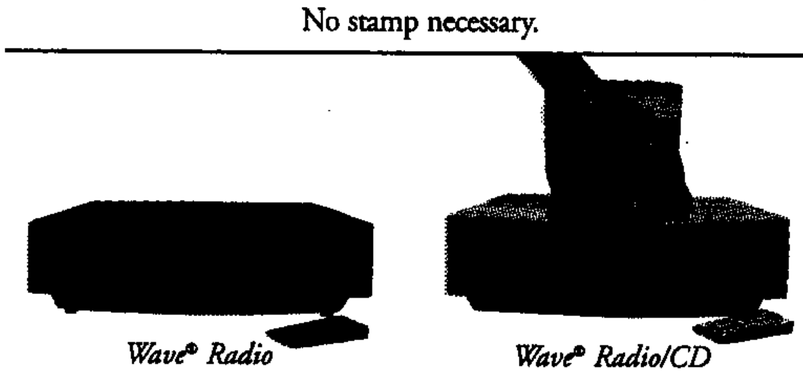

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